

Shenandoah

THE WASHINGTON AND LEE UNIVERSITY REVIEW

Vol. XI, No. 2

Winter, 1960

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Importance of Literature at the Present Time	<i>Randall Stewart</i>	3
Dialectic (A Poem)	<i>Leonard Nathan</i>	12
Love's a Cold Kingdom	<i>George Garrett</i>	13
Drama Imagery in Shakespeare: <i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	<i>Randolph M. Bulgin</i>	23
The Desperate Hours and the Violent Screen	<i>Martin Dworkin</i>	39
Poetry		49-56
<i>John Nixon, Jr., Sam Bradley, Stephen Spender, Albert Howard Carter</i>		
Book Reviews		57-71
<i>Edward Hamer, Edward F. Turner, Jr., Thomas H. Carter, Marshall W. Fishwick</i>		

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Randall Stewart

THE IMPORTANCE OF LITERATURE AT THE PRESENT TIME

The reaction which swept the country some months ago following the launching of the first Russian Sputnik was a foolish and hysterical one. It was urged on all sides that we should produce more and better scientists, and produce them quick. Every high school hastened to assure its constituency that science was studied in *their* school, and as proof that this was so, there was an accompanying picture showing a little girl in pigtails holding a test tube.

Of course we shall have to have better scientists. But they can't be produced overnight, they can't be produced by teaching only science, and they can't be produced by premature specialization in science. For the great scientists will be men and women who know more than their specialties alone. The editor of our college paper asked me the other day, "How can you justify the study of literature in this critical time when our great national need calls for men trained in science?" My answer was, that the man who has studied literature (other things being equal) will be a better scientist than the man who hasn't. (I suspect that this might be proved by the biographies of the great scientists.)

Nothing will be gained for science by neglecting the broad liberal arts program leading to the B.A. degree. For the great scientists, if I rightly understand the matter, are men of thought (not mere technicians or devisers of techniques), and the experience which they may have had with problems in non-scientific

RANDALL STEWART, chairman of the English Department at Vanderbilt University, gave this topic first as an address before the Virginia-North Carolina College English Association in October, 1959.

subjects will be an aid to them in making creative contributions to science. And it will be an aid, too, I should suppose, in enabling them to give the kind of leadership which we so desperately need, and which scientists have not thusfar been able to give, in the solution of certain acute problems which have come about in modern society as a result of the advance of science itself.

We hear public speakers from time to time bewail what they call "the plight of the humanities." But I don't quite understand what they mean. It's true that nobody will give much money to the humanities (unless for some experiment with TV or the like), while economists and nuclear physicists get barrels of money for this and that. But what do we need with money? (I'm not talking about salaries, books, or scholarships.) There is an unfortunate disposition on the part of some people, I fear, to estimate the importance of the work of a department by the sums of money which the department can wangle from a Foundation. But surely this is an error. The Rockefeller Foundation gave Vanderbilt \$4,950 for the purpose of holding a reunion of the Fugitive Poets. This sum was paltry compared with sums given by the Foundation to the social and natural scientists. But it would surely be a mistake to suppose that the relative importance of these various undertakings is in direct ratio to the sums expended. The other departments needed large sums; we needed only a small sum. I think the general recognition of this fact is important, because if you get the situation in the humanities where people are unhappy because nobody gives them money, and where they spend their time trying to think up some project in the humanities which would require sums comparable to the cost of a cyclotron or a survey of the economic status of the tenant farmer in the South, then you have a situation where people in the humanities had better go out of business, because they have lost faith in their real job, which doesn't need (if it's the real job that is being done) big grants from the Foundations.

The mendicancy of the scholar today is something which I personally deplore. I saw recently an application for a grant-in-aid, the object of which was to pay a typist to type a research paper of not too many pages. Why doesn't the author type it himself? Many a scholar nowadays can't budge an inch without a re-

search assistant to look up his references. Why can't he look them up himself? What has become of the oldtime do-it-yourself scholar, who did his own reading, looked up his own references, gathered his own data, drew his own inferences, prepared his own manuscript, and carried it himself (without benefit of assistant, secretary, messenger boy, or bellhop) to the parcel-post window or the Railway Express, addressed the parcel himself, and paid the charge out of his own pocket? What has become of the heroes of yesteryear? May I suggest that the explanation might be found in the bureaucritization of the colleges, which means that the bigger staff you have, the more floors you occupy, the more money you spend, the more important you are? May I suggest that the explanation can be traced to a particularly insidious form of *amour propre*?

The study of English and American literature today, to the best of my knowledge and belief, is in a flourishing state. The present enrollment in our department, for example, is at an all-time high, despite the fact that the increase in the size of the college has been comparatively small. Why should this be so? Today's undergraduate, I believe, has a new interest in literature and a new seriousness. It is not the uncritical enthusiasm of a generation ago, when our campuses swarmed with Wolfe fans, Hemingway fans, and so on. Today's undergraduate is no fan at all. He is, rather, a seeker. He is not looking for answers, either (that is, pat answers packaged neatly and sententiously in capsules), but a new wisdom, or a new understanding of an old wisdom. Like Warren's Jack Burden, he has rejected the "great twitch," because he knows that man does not live mechanically, that human life is more than a congeries of responses to stimuli. He is interested, therefore, in writers who deal seriously with moral problems, who recognize the complexity of such problems, who dramatize the truth of paradox, who show (as one of Faulkner's characters puts it) that "the past isn't dead, it isn't even past!"

Gone, I think, is the antiquarian interest in the merely minor figure; gone, the old sacrosanctness of everybody who ever wrote a line. If meaning is there, the undergraduate wants to get at it, and he does a pretty good job of getting at it by and for himself. The "understanding" approach catches on in Freshman Year, and by

the time he is a Senior, he shows a growing expertness as well as seriousness in his reading of books which are worth reading. This reading must be largely an independent adventure, the teacher acting as an encourager and catalyst. Such syntheses as may be obtainable must be arrived at largely by each reader, not provided readymade by the teacher, and least of all by a "co-ordinator" (nefarious name!).

The reading—the critical reading—of books which are worth reading! That is the main business of the English department. In this day and age, I think we have time for only the best; the student has time for only the best. In English we should always be putting our best foot forward. In American literature, we have time for Hawthorne and Melville, but do we have time for Charles Brockden Brown? In Shakespeare, we have time for the great histories, comedies, and tragedies, but do we have time for *Titus Andronicus*, or the three parts of *Henry VI*? I doubt it, I doubt it very much. (I'm talking, of course, about undergraduate instruction, and not the graduate school, where a high degree of specialization is good and necessary.)

A young man told me the other day that more undergraduates at a leading Eastern university are reading the poems of William Cullen Bryant than the plays of Shakespeare. If the young man was correctly informed, then we have here an obviously bad situation, amounting to a crisis in our culture. It's fine, of course, to know our own writers, and some of them are of great literary interest and importance, but Bryant is not one of *these*, and literarily speaking, he is scarcely to be mentioned in the same breath with Shakespeare. Are we then in danger of confusing patriotism with art? Is this distinguished Eastern university perhaps developing a literary jingoism?

Every now and then some group—we might call it a pressure group—attempts, for one reason or another, to suppress a great classic. In the nineteenth century, there was the prudish group. In response to their pressure, Thomas Bowdler brought out a purified Shakespeare. In 1868, Mrs. Hawthorne brought out a bowdlerized edition of her husband's notebooks, although there was al-

most nothing in them that Bowdler himself would have objected to. Mrs. Hawthorne's revisions, in fact, are about the *ne plus ultra* of the whole prudish movement, which resulted, in the late nineteenth century, in the primmest genteelism imaginable.

The post World War I generation of the 1920's revolted against this genteelism (which they mistakenly called "Puritanism"), and our writers since that time have enjoyed great freedom of expression. Some people today think that this freedom (like so many freedoms) has been abused, and I am not prepared to say that it has not. The test would be, I think, whether the objectionable words are used for sensational effect or for the purpose of serious characterization. I have read recently several encomiastic references to J. D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*, one commentator declaring that *Catcher in the Rye* speaks more directly to American college youth than any other book of our time. Yet the book is so full of vulgarities, adolescent vulgarities, that I might hesitate to assign it to a class of young ladies. The young ladies, today, of course, would probably not be shocked by it at all. But there will always be, I suppose, certain *old* ladies, and conventional business men, who, while admitting that literature should deal with life, and life isn't always nice, maintain nevertheless that literature should be nice, should, that is, falsify life to that extent, which is quite a falsification.

But we really aren't bothered with this sort of thing very much anymore. If the modern period in literature is a great period (and by common critical consent it seems to be so regarded), if it is perhaps the greatest literary period since the Elizabethan, then we recall that the Elizabethans weren't queasy either, and we arrive at the correct conclusion, I think, that greatness in literature is incompatible with queasiness.

Sometimes an ideological-reformist group attacks a great book with a view to suppressing it. An interesting example of this occurred recently. Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* was "banned" by the New York City Board of Education. The reason, I suppose, was that the book is undemocratic, it shows the inequality of the races. It is too bad that this should happen, of all places, in New York City, where people need more desperately than anywhere else education in race relations. *Huckleberry Finn* is the Ameri-

can classic on race relations, and one can learn all sorts of valuable things from it, if one will only read it understandingly. It is worth a library of abstract treatment. If we can put ourselves on the raft with Huck and Jim, if we can experience their experiences, we will be saved many of the mistakes which those who think only in high abstractionist terms are likely to make.

I was speaking of Shakespeare a moment ago, and I am reminded to say that while, so far as I know, there is no pressure group at the moment dedicated to suppressing Shakespeare, every now and then someone asks (with a skeptical twinkle), *Why Shakespeare?* with the unspoken intimation that quite possibly the English Department is perpetuating an ancient superstition.

The root objection to Shakespeare, if we could run it down, would probably be a two-pronged affair: (1) Shakespeare isn't very nice (he's full of obscenities); and 2) Shakespeare isn't very democratic (he's full of inequalities). The first I have already tried to dispose of: life itself isn't very nice, and an unwillingness to face that fact shows queasiness, or anemia, or a separation from reality which in extreme cases may require psychiatric treatment. And, of course, Shakespeare isn't very democratic. His world is a world of hierarchies. There are kings and emperors, senators and generals, attendant lords and ladies, sycophants and hangers-on, plebians and rustics, bartenders and city riffraff, and so on. Society is a graduated scale.

Has there ever been a society which wasn't hierarchical, and is it likely that there ever will be? Some students of society are saying that when we shall have got rid of our present hierarchies, others will be standing in line, others are already standing in line, to take their places. Does democracy require a flat, faceless, distinctionless society? Must everybody get an *A* in a *democratic class*?

What is man? (For that is the great question to which literature addresses itself.) Noble in reason? infinite in faculty? in form and moving express and admirable? in action like an angel? in apprehension like a god? the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals? Or, is he a wretched, rash, intruding fool, a quintessence

of dust, a creature who, if used according to his deserts, could not escape a whipping? Hamlet is of two minds on the subject, and so is Shakespeare, and so are all the great imaginative writers. Man is at once noble and ignoble, heroic and mean, fine and sordid. What would we gain by supposing otherwise? What would we gain from a literature which presented a fool's paradise?

One point about a democracy, as I see it, is that in a democracy the writer is free to tell the truth about man. Hawthorne said that the work of art sins unpardonably in so far as it swerves from the "truth of the human heart," and Faulkner said about the same thing in the Nobel Prize speech. What is the truth of the human heart? Ah, what indeed? "Purify the inward sphere," said Hawthorne. But how purify the inward sphere? Not, surely, by judicial fiat; and still less, by the simple declaration that it is pure already.

The proper study of mankind is man, and literature is the study of man. Whatever our mechanical progress may be, whatever our technological marvels, whatever our voyages under the icecaps and our explorations in outer space, it seems reasonable to suppose that we shall always have the problem of man on our hands. For man is not a machine; he does not improve automatically with the improvement of machines. The reverse seems today more than a remote possibility: man *may* deteriorate as the machine advances; he may even be destroyed by his machines. Poor wayward creature, he appears even now to be plotting his own destruction.

Shakespeare and the others remind us of what we are. Literature shows us the human condition. If we should ever be so blinded by our mechanical marvels and our bureaucratic stratagems that we can no longer see man himself; if we should ever confuse mechanical progress with human progress; if the managerial revolution should ever elevate us en masse to that "utopian" state where the great writers have nothing to say to us; then indeed we shall have reached a state where the human being as such, and human values, have ceased to have a meaning. We can't afford to give up our literature because we can't afford to give up our humanity, we can't afford to cease to be human.

And now, a word about our present opportunity.

The English professor has never been so free as now. The New Criticism, I suppose, has been the chief liberating influence. But for whatever reason, the English professor nowadays can do almost anything he wants to do; and if what he does is good in itself, he will have his reward. He can do research (historical, biographical, bibliographical, linguistic). He can do criticism—of whatever school. He can write poems, plays, novels, and receive academic recognition on a par with that accorded the researchers and the critics. I for one feel inclined to applaud this new freedom.

The things which discourage some are almost certainly blessings in disguise. We don't get the big grants, but may they not be a snare and a delusion, distracting and demoralizing as they often are? The age is preoccupied with science, but may not this be a blessing also? Already we see signs on the campus that human beings cannot be nourished exclusively on the sere harvest of science, for man is more than objective, impersonal intellect. He is emotion and will, too, and the kind of truth embodied in literature is quite as essential to man's well-being as the kind of truth embodied in science. (We have at Vanderbilt pre-medical students majoring in English, and neither the Medical School nor the English Department sees anything wrong in that.)

Our opportunity has never been so great as now, and if things go awry, the fault will be our own.

If we do not believe that what we are doing is the most important work in the world, then something indeed *is* wrong. If we find ourselves succumbing to bureaucratic standards, if we have sneaking aspirations to a deanship or assistant deanship or maybe only a directorship, if we secretly envy the man with a lot of secretaries, dictaphones, telephones, IBMs, *et cetera*, if we secretly think he is more important than a mere professor, then of course we're lost. The world at large may think it, but we are not lost unless and until *we* think it. The greatness of the great places has been based, and is still based, on the autonomous professor, who, when he enters his classroom and shuts the door, is monarch of all he surveys, his right there is none to dispute, and no television screen can take the place of this basic teaching situation.

In Cotton Mather's *Magnalia*, there is a collection of biographies of the early New England ministers. I recall especially the

phrase which recurs repeatedly: *the work of the study*. It is a noble concept; and when the work of the study falls off, giving way to making surveys, directing programs, sitting on boards, getting out News Letters, cooking up phony projects, running to Washington, then we will be missing our big chance. We need to do literary work of such excellence that it will tower above the wrecks of time.

Francis Bacon said: "Reading maketh a full man, writing an exact man, conference a ready man." Well, we are *ready*! But for what, God knows. The reading and writing, of course, are the work of the study. If we can rededicate ourselves to *that*, future generations will rise up and call us blessed.

Leonard Nathan

Dialectic

I was Socrates all day long in streets of dark
And praised the good, the lovely, the true, the just;
Each lucid dream my instinct staged was right
And came to daylight reasonable as it might.
I was that man, fated by myself
And loving it, kept lively by my young
Whose splendid earthen figures shaped such grace
That I deduced the soul and gave it tongue.
My final hour took me beyond mere sense
And showed what worlds of doubt I could command.
Now I awake hereafter, where a cup
Steadies, like a principle, my hand.

LEONARD NATHAN has published in *Poetry*, *Commentary*, *Quarterly Review of Literature*, and *Compass Review*. His first volume of poems, *Western Reaches*, was published last year. A poem previously published in *Shenandoah* has just been reprinted in *Best Stories and Articles*.

George Garrett

LOVE'S A COLD KINGDOM

As soon as I put down the receiver I rose and left my cubicle office. I tiptoed down the hallway, bouyant on the expensive carpet, hearing about me like the soft murmurs from confessionals in a Catholic church the monotonous sounds of dictating voices, voices speaking to people and to machines, and the faint precise impeccable murmur of the electric typewriters. God knows they never stop. I entered the anteroom, still tiptoeing like a man late to a ceremony, came to where I could stand directly behind Rena, the receptionist. A glossy thing she was, from the extravagance of her blond hair to the high shine of her high heels. Her hands were resting on the desk beside a blank pad, and she was staring straight ahead with (I imagined, since I couldn't at that moment see her face) her fine blank mask—savage curve of lip, eyebrows sharp and plucked and arched, eyelids blued like dark wings, bruise-colored—promising everything under the sun, whatever you with your briefcase and holes in your shoes and a patch in the seat or the crotch of your trousers and maybe a single idea burning in your head like a pilot light, everything you could imagine and ask for except self-respect.

I leaned over to whisper in her ear, troubled by the slight wave of perfume. Her ear was a perfect thing, too, like a glass flower or, better, like a seashell delicately whorled. You thought as you bent toward that perfect ear that it ought to be kissed out of pure joy, but then you thought that maybe it ought to be listened to like a seashell, for all the long history and captured rage of the sea. In both cases you were always wrong. You might as well have kissed the ear of a public statue. If you listened, and I did that once, you would have heard nothing, nothing at all.

"Doll," I said, "don't move. I've got you covered."

GEORGE GARRETT teaches at Wesleyan University. He has won the Prix de Rome and has written a volume of short stories, a volume of poems, and a recent novel, *The Finished Man*.

Rena jumped a little and and swivelled around to face me with her swift smile.

"You slay me," she said, "sneaking around and all. You simply slay me."

"I'm allergic to lions," I said.

(Inside joke. The boss's name is Leo.)

"Man, you got to make with the crazy whip and chair," she said.

"Tiptoeing will get you no where."

"Look, doll, I just got a phone call."

"Congratulations! Who was it—Selznik?"

"Just a guy. Name of Singletree."

"Who he?"

"Nobody, doll, just nobody. I mean really. Have you met anybody who's nobody lately?"

"Nobody's nobody. Everybody is somebody."

"Singletree is nobody, I swear," I said. "He's like the vanishing Indian."

"So what am I supposed to do, break out the teepee and the wampum?"

"Look, he's an old, old friend. When he shows up send him straight back. Don't buzz me or anything. Don't keep him waiting out—here."

"All right," she said. "Will do. What's so special about him? Everybody who's *somebody* has to go through the cooling off period."

"That's just the point," I began, but I was saved because just then we heard the soft noise of the elevator, and Rena spun around to face the world with its briefcase and the holes in its shoes. And I tiptoed back to the cubicle from whence I had come.

There were scripts and synopses piled high on my desk, in blue folders, in brown folders, in notebooks, clipped and stapled and even dogeared, all the raw wheat and chaff, ready to be ground, milled, sifted, refined, and finally expensively presented in a neat standard package like a loaf of bread (pre-sliced) to the Television Public. I walked to the window. There's a nice view there of nothing special but the long serpentine shine of one-way traffic. And it was cold and gray, likely to snow, and traffic going one-way endlessly is endlessly depressing. Sheep. Goats. The flowing symphony

of life. Just play along on your little instrument whatever it may be—uke, jew's harp, kazoo or comb—until at last Gabriel arises with his radiant horn and blows it all away with one fiery breath.

It was Singletree creating this mood. The sadness. The waste of it all. And maybe, too, the shame. *He* would have been the first one to laugh my extravagant and easy self-pity into smithereens. Well, there's nothing like labor to still the restless soul, they say. So I sat down once again behind my desk, an Ozymandius with a lone and hardly level waste of paper before me, and I went to work. I read:

SIGNATURE:

We see an audience, well-dressed, waiting in anticipation for a concert to begin. Men in tuxedos. Women in evening gowns and furs. The maestro approaches the podium. A scattering of well-bred applause. CLOSE UP of maestro as he raises his baton. As he brings it down we hear a shot and he topples.

CUT TO:

CLOSE UP of a hand at the curtain, holding a smoking pistol.

FADE OUT:

First Commercial and Credits.

And then I began to think of Angus Singletree.

A way, way back, in the days beyond recall, a few years ago we had roomed together at Princeton. All four years together. From the beginning to the end we had lived in old Edwards along poverty row. And a strange combination it had been, a Jew who wanted to be a doctor (then) and a Southerner with a crazy name. Whoever named a child Angus when the last name was Singletree? "Did you have Scotch in the family?" I'd say. "Nothing but bourbon," he'd say. "But we had cows." "Black Angus?" "No, but you can't name somebody Jersey, can you?" A crazy Southerner with a taste for elegance and no money and a habit of arrogance with neither the physical attributes to carry it off, nor, really, the natural inclination. Just the habit. With the result that his eyes were always being blacked and his nose broken and his front teeth chipped. And late at night he'd come rolling home, singing and

drunk and bloody, never self-pitying, in fact, damn it, proud of his new wounds. And myself, I'd be still up studying and studying subjects for which I had small aptitude and even less interest, because I was going to be a doctor come hell or high water.

What joined us, then, was hate, I suppose. We were agreed in our hate of *them*, all the ones Angus called "the good guys." Sometimes we had to hate each other as well, but never with the unsheathed passion (which was mutual) reserved for all the world's gray-flanneled, cleanshaven, healthy minded, well-adjusted *them*. And somehow our friendship, if you call it that, endured on that diet, though, looking back on it, I know it was a sour marrow bone.

So much for all that. A few years have gone. No doctor I. I work for my cousin Leo who graduated from the garment district to television when that was possible and often done, jumped for his life, then clung like an old barnacle in spite of (maybe because of) ignorance, lack of taste, bad manners, overtly conspicuous consumption and all the other well-known characteristics of the archetypal kike. He clung to his perch, his niche, and he learned. And the truth is he's as good as anyone in the industry now and could pass for an Ivy-leaguer if asked to. But doesn't like to be asked. Which is why I, sole Ivy-leaguer of our family, was hired in the first place—to "give the joint a Madison Avenue tone when we need it."

I'm not complaining. I make me a buck. And my little brother's in med school now.

And Angus, damn him. *He* was the boy with the talent, with all the talent, my idea of a poet. Married and divorced. The Army. Sixty days bad time in the stockade for AWOL. Wounded in Korea. Back to the States. Work for a publisher. Fired. Work for a magazine. Fired. Teaching at a boy's prep school. Nervous breakdown. Back to graduate school. Next the State kooky hatch for a couple of years. Poems? Zero, zip, none.

And now he was out and in the city and had called me from the station that he was coming to see me.

"Is this what you really do?" Angus said, coming into the cubicle. "Do you really have to *read* them before they go on the air?"

"Ssh, the place is lousy with hidden mikes."

He looked paler and thinner, if that is possible, and still bird- or squirrel-nervous, cocking his head this way and that as if he were listening for a sound you couldn't quite hear (he always claimed he could hear those high dog whistles that you're not supposed to) or perhaps detecting the subtle signs of a threat. He was smiling with his still-chipped teeth, and he needed a haircut badly as ever, and his eyes, as always, were as bright and clear and depthless as springwater.

"Sam," he said, taking my hand, "I can see it agrees with you. You're going to be one of those wonderful little round comfortable Jews. I like that kind."

"No, I'm the pushy kind. This is just my disguise."

"Well," he said. "Now *you* say something insulting."

"All right. You do look like the walking corpse of the Old Southland. You're hookwormed, pelagra-ridden, corncobbed, and, even if they did let you out, you're probably still crazy as hell."

All of a sudden tears brimmed in his eyes.

"Sam," he said, "I love you."

He moved to the window and stood there looking down at the traffic.

"Don't mind me," he said after a moment. "Go ahead and reject a script. Do something useful."

I looked at my watch. It was nearly four o'clock. I started to tidy up my desk, making a neat tower of Babel out of the unread scripts.

"It's going to snow," Angus said. "I love it when it snows in this town. It comes down gray and soft like burned paper and everything hushes."

"Look, Angus, what say we go and get a drink?"

He turned around quickly and smiled.

"You thought I was going to jump."

"Christ, go ahead and jump if you want to. Every man to his own taste. A martini will do me fine."

The place I took him to (And there may have been an unconscious malice of one sort or another in this. We *did* learn to hate.) was the current favorite of the TV crowd. That is to say

it was—if you haven't seen it or one like it—ostenstationally quiet, heavy with ersatz elegance, a studio executive's notion of a gracious pub. Red-jacketed waiters moving as deftly and softfooted as shadows. A bar with a bank of the very best liquor winking in the appropriately subdued light. Two bartenders working, one young and dark and pretty, a dated Valentino, the other with white hair and thin lips, and both so starched and white and floating they seemed like some kind of high priests. The white haired one was currently called "the best bartender in town." Soft, tinted, flattering mirrors in which the fat boys swam like bass and the women, curvy at their tailored sides, were as lean and predatory as sharks or barracuda. All of it, of course, in the worst of taste.

We sat down at the bar and ordered double martinis, watching the white haired master at work. He had bravado with a lemon peel. I'll say that for him.

"Groundhog's day," Angus said, raising his glass.

"This way to the egress."

Mine's the old Barnum joke, how he got all the people to leave his museum with that sign. Angus' was another kind of joke. "Here's the way it is with me and the world," he used to say. "I'm just like a groundhog safe in a hole. I want to come out. I mean I really do, to poke my head out and say 'Wake up, you bastards, it's Spring all over the place!' But every time I stick my head up it's the middle of winter. Back to my hole in the ground."

So we talked awhile about the old times. But they were far behind. He talked about all the crazy people he got to know, attendants and doctors and patients, in the institution, but his joking had an edge to it. It's hard to be funny about State mental hospitals. Then I tried to tell him about my job, about Leo the Roaring Lion, about Rena, about our writers, the rich ones and the poor ones, and, too, about my other cousin, Herb, who was worried because I'd led a sheltered life and was always taking me down to the garment district for a look at reality. You know, coffee and danish, quick sweaty deals, and the models who look like walking mosaics and turn out to talk like something chalked on a wall. Of course we laughed, we laughed and we drank, but there was a kind of hopeless humor about it all, a flourish and ruf-

fles of weariness like the messages warships used to run up in signal flags to each other. HMS *Imponderable* to HMS *Repugnant*: "Matthew 8:29." *Repugnant* to *Imponderable*: "Jeremiah 13:23."

Sooner or later the talk was bound to turn.

"What are your plans now, Angus?"

"My *what*?"

"You got a job? Do you need a job?"

"What would I need a job for? Money?"

"You can do various things with money."

"Sure," he said. "Money begets money. Money begets money. You know what the forbidden fruit was? An apple? Hell no. It was a neat little stack of money. Or maybe not so neat and not so little. A regular compost heap of the stuff."

"I'm trying to be serious for a minute."

"Don't. It doesn't become you."

"Look, Angus, I think we could find a job for you. As long as you didn't take it too seriously. For auld lang sine and all that jazz."

"I don't take anything seriously," he said. "What I mean is I take everything too seriously whether it's serious or not. The trouble is I never know whether to spit or kiss."

"It isn't hard work," I went on (foolishly). I can fix it up with Leo. And it does pay."

"That's good. That's splendid," he said. "That's what I really need. I want to work hard and save up a lot and then go to Sweden?"

"Sweden?"

"Right you are, I'm going to Sweden and I'm going to buy me a great big high-powered speedboat and a great big high-powered pair of binoculars. And then I'm going to cruise up and down in front of the women's beaches and just look at the nekkid women. Notice I didn't use the word nude. I didn't used the word naked. I said nekkid because I am a trueblue Southerner, and I believe, as is meet and right, in the ultimate sundering segregation of the sinners and the saints."

The other conversations along the bar, the insect rise and fall and tremor of their voices, had ceased. Everybody seemed to be

looking at us. Angus was grinning and sweat shone all over his face.

"And after Sweden I'm headed for Finland. I'm going to take thousands and thousands of steam baths. And this time the women—once again *nekkid* as peeled bananas—are going to whip the devil out of me with birch switches. It's good for you. All the time I was in the crazy house—the Funhouse of Glass I call it, because everywhere you turn you see yourself reflected, yourself fat, yourself thin, yourself beautiful, yourself ugly, yourself masochistic, yourself sadistic, yourself manic, yourself catatonic, yourself senile and messing your bed and having to be fed like a baby, yourself screaming in a straightjacket—the whole time I was in the Funhouse I kept imagining those Finnish steam baths and those colossal, huge-bodied, pinkfleshed, nordic furies who are going to whip the devil out of me."

"Is everything all right, gentlemen?" The white-haired bartender asked.

"We're going to get something to eat," I said. "We were just leaving."

"No, by God," Angus said to him. "Everything is all wrong."

Then he lowered his voice to a stage whisper, ignoring the sudden raising of eyebrows like a sky of startled wings, the stifled giggles of a girl farther down the bar.

"Sam," he said. "I'll admit I had half a mind to ask you for a job when I called you today. But I changed my mind. All I really want to do is ask you one question."

He paused and waited.

"Okay, Angus. Ask and it shall be answered."

"Sam, my old jewbuddy, who's going to whip the devil out of you?"

He gestured and slipped off the barstool, sat down hard on the floor, but bounced up to his feet, straightened, hiked back his thin shoulders like a caricature of a cadet. He waved a benediction and started for the door. After he got his coat from the hatcheck girl he came back.

"You people must think I'm drunk," he said. "You're wrong. I'm not drunk. I'm crazy."

That produced quite a laugh along the row of stools, but when he turned to look at me there were tears in his eyes again.

"Sambo," he said. "I love you like a brother, but it's snowing gray snow in the city and I want to be alone."

"Give me a call."

"Sure," he said. "I'll do that."

The Valentino-bartender mixed me another drink.

"Who was that guy?"

"Nobody you'd know."

"A writer?"

"Sort of."

"I thought so," he said. "I can spot them every time. Rod Serling was in here the other day."

"That so?" I said. "Which way to the egress—I mean the phone?"

Once inside the phone booth I had my troubles. I dropped a fistful of change on the floor, but I knew if I bent over to pick it up again, I'd never make it. I'd just curl up and go to sleep. I finally found a dime in my watch pocket, put it in the phone and managed to dial the number.

"Rena," I said. "Come live with me and be my love."

She laughed in my ear, her laughter sounded like my fistfull of coins when they sprinkled on the floor.

"Oh, it's *you*. You slay me. I'd love to, but the sad thing is I already got a date."

"Break it."

"Sam, you're so silly. Where are you now? Are you drunk?"

"Yes, I'm drunk. I've been drinking ever since I left with nobody. Now I want to drink with you."

"Some other time, huh? I've got to take a bath and all."

"Take a bath with me."

"What kind of a girl do you think I am?"

"I'll tell you what I think. I think you're a goose girl. I mean you *ought* to be a goose girl in the good old days, but nowadays you're a glass girl."

"You're a riot, but I've got to hang up."

"You can't do that. This call's costing me money. Money and

love go together. Love's a cold kingdom and money is the key."

But she hung up anyway. I looked at all those coins on the floor and I left them there. I went back to the bar. I decided to talk to the white haired one.

"Do you know what the trouble with this world is?" I said. "People won't talk to you and they won't listen to you. Not even on the phone. And that machine was *designed* for it."

"Is that so?"

Randolph M. Bulgin

DRAMATIC IMAGERY IN SHAKESPEARE: *ROMEO AND JULIET*

I

Irony freshens perception. It makes awareness keener but often more confusing, the truth more certain but less simple; for irony awakens us to the complexity of the world, to the fragmentary nature of our experience. But metaphor's a liar, albeit a sweet and necessary one; and its greatest lie is that of unity, coherence, simplification, generalization—call it what you wish, even say, if you will, that the world makes sense. The subjunctive may be the only mode adequate to our condition—a possibility glanced at in the old saw that truth's stranger than fiction. Your liar favors the indicative; for falsehood, even more than truth, has its own propriety, its own ranks and orders, its own hierarchy. Any lawyer can tell you that absolute consistency calls testimony into doubt. In the early 1930's Germany hungered for a big lie; and Hitler told it, with repetition and consistency—an unhappy but viciously effective conjunction of the man, the hour, and the fable.

If such a meeting is effective in the nightmare world of politics, where Reality and malign Fancy couple to produce the State, how much more necessary is decorum to the life of that sweet fiction we call art. The problem of metaphor is the problem of mimesis, and the problem of mimesis is not so bluntly that of truth as it is that of context and relation. A given image must conform to two contexts: to the macrocosm of experience and to the microcosm of the work of art. It must satisfy both verisimilitude and the integrity of the artifact. In some sense—perhaps best left undefined, for life is short—it must convince, however briefly or tenuously, that the two worlds are related. The passing but intense aware-

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ness of this relation, delighting and enlightening, makes for the strut and stink of great art. All this even the lowliest reader occasionally senses, though he may not know it or understand.

But behind the Horatian formula there still lies the problem of context, perhaps more accurately, that of a given metaphor functioning within a work while relating to the world. How this applies in lyric poetry, we all know; we have been to school to the best critics, and even college freshmen can lisp the catechism of Brooks, Purser, and Warren—at once the missionaries and monsignors of a new cult. How it works in dramatic poetry, none of us is too certain. The new criticism, for all its victories, is not happy with the larger forms; it often stumbles when approaching a novel or play, and collapses before an epic. And as a loyal son of the new faith, I should like to suggest a reason for that failure—neglect of principle, neglect of law, oh most cardinal of sins, neglect of context.

Admittedly, the task is hard and our lot a grievous one; we suffer from the original fault of our condition—failing memories and incapacious minds. The context of a lyric poem is unburdened by length; our apprehension of a Cavalier lyric is brief but nearly complete. Novels, plays, epics are a different case altogether; simple magnitude complicates issues, in art as in astronomy. Length undermines totality of impression, and context becomes a shifting and persistently illusive mirage—an impossible vast Eldorado of the critical imagination. Percy Lubbock pointed this out, effectively and intelligently, for readers of the novel. He even suggested a number of countermeasures, expedients for coralling an unruly context; and the criticism of the novel has enormously benefited. Those of us who love plays have not profited from the lesson; we have sinned against context and the light.

The novel is well protected; Mr. C. S. Lewis has spoken wittily in defense of epic. It remains for us to explore the not altogether unexplored—the dramatic context and the dramatic image—perhaps a work of supererogation. Whether or not professors understand the stage is, in that most damning of expressions, strictly academic. But theory is still delightful, if perhaps chimeric; and the nature and function of dramatic imagery merit examination.

Here it is, I think, that context becomes so very important; the

effective criticism of plays must be both holistic and dramatic. We must have some awareness of the work as a whole, some sense of its entirety, its comprehensiveness and solidity. Even more important, we must see the individual action and the isolated image as they exist in a *dramatic* context. We must never forget that good plays achieve their full being, their rightful existence, only on the stage and in the spoken words and concrete movements of their actors. The dramatically effective image, unlike the merely poetic image, must function within that context—a context far more specific, far more definite and tangible, than that of any poem or novel. After all, we can see the actors, quite literally, and we hear their voices, not with the imaginary eye and ear, but with the familiar and accustomed organs of daily use.

Perhaps I can clarify the matter further by positing an ideal instance of imagery utilized to dramatic effect. It must be an image which relates to the whole of the play in which it occurs; it must be essential and indispensable. It must share in the complex of dramatic and verbal tensions which inform the structure of the work. It follows, moreover, that such an image must bear a functional relation to the character in whose speech it appears, to the characters to whom it is spoken, to the flow of the action, and to the comprehensive thematic emphasis of the play. *If it is to be an ideal instance of dramatic imagery, it must complement and emphasize the visual image which the stage and its actors present to the audience.*

There are still other characteristics of good dramatic imagery, some of them rather obvious, others less so. One of the more obvious concerns the verbal form of such imagery. Quite simply, the vehicle must be that of good theatrical speech; and by this I mean no more than that it must be phrased and pointed so as to allow reasonable ease of delivery by the actors. There are admittedly a number of what might be called epic similes in Shakespeare, Marlowe, and the great Elizabethan dramatists; but the epic simile as a type of image is often too long and involved for real dramatic effectiveness or ease of stage delivery. Since actors must breathe, the best dramatic metaphors are somewhat shorter, or if long, they tend to break up into clusters of smaller images.

This brevity is not only for the benefit of the actors but also

for an aid to the audience, which must depend upon its own ears and its own memory for its apprehension of any given speech. The audience does not have the advantage of the printed page before its eyes, and the good dramatist is in all likelihood one who remembers this simple truth. Economy of statement has long been recognized as a sort of poetic *sine qua non*; and this is certainly true of dramatic poetry, though within the limits of reasonably rapid comprehensibility by its auditors. The exceptions are many, notable, and often successful; but the playwright cannot employ without risk the contracted, even distilled imagery of certain of our modern poets, because such imagery yields only to repeated reading and rereading, while the dramatist can expect, theoretically at least, only one hearing.

Economy of statement and relation to the dramatic whole: herein lie the two great tests of imagery in drama; and with these two, in a sense, we come full circle. They are two aspects of the same problem, and it is precisely the related image which is both most economical of means and most highly functional. In itself it may be very simple—the briefest sort of analogy with a bird, river, or tree—but because of its content, its place in the flow of the action and the development of character, it not only contributes its share of meaning to the whole but assumes a meaning beyond its own compass, a larger statement which comprehends in some measure the entirety of the play in which it appears. That we cannot formulate this statement in its full integrity does not deny its existence but is rather a damning testimony to the incapaciousness of our own minds. Our weakness resorts to such treacherous abstracts as character, action, and the isolated image; but in any analysis of dramatic imagery, we should see these terms as the half-truths which they are.

II

I should like to take a poetic tragedy—*Romeo and Juliet*—and examine its use of dramatic imagery in a few key scenes. Granted the possibility of a criticism both holistic and dramatic, what does it tell us of the imagery in the play? I believe that it can tell us a great deal, but that what it yields is in the first instance disap-

pointing. We had hoped that it was a greater play than it seems to be—an adolescent hope, perhaps; and we wonder where the fault lies—in our method or in the play. On closer examination, we worry less; for there are certain things we should keep in mind. One is that the play is an early work, that it is in some ways more artful than artistic. We should not expect the mastery of an older and wiser Shakespeare. We should beware of the danger of reading the play in the great shadow of *Hamlet* and *King Lear*, and we should endeavor to see it in the context which it creates for itself.

Another factor to be remembered concerns our method—that of a holistic criticism. For all its virtues, let us not forget that it is a method which will go to enormous lengths to seek out a complexity, whether real or imagined. And *Romeo and Juliet* is not a particularly complex play; it obviously lacks the weight and magnitude of the great tragedies. Yet even here a holistic criticism can be of use. Because *Romeo and Juliet* is not so profound as the more massive tragedies, and because its use of imagery is now dramatic, now merely poetic, analysis should prove all the more valuable in showing wherein differences lie. For such a purpose, *Romeo and Juliet* tells us perhaps more than a greater play would do. I think we shall find that what seems merely decorative and undramatic at first inspection will often prove to have a far closer relation to the play's essential integrity than we might have expected. *Romeo and Juliet* is its own world, and it is a curious world in which the decorative is often made essential, as in the best baroque architecture.

The play opens with the entrance of Sampson and Gregory, two cowardly servants of the House of Capulet. Their purpose, at least in part, is to set the quarrelsome background to the tragedy which is to come. They anticipate struggles far greater than their own, and the bawdy of their speech is not without relevance. They pun on "maiden heads," on "sense," perhaps even on the words "tool" and "naked weapon." I should not wish to push the matter too far, yet in this punning and in the rather base imagery of the servants' speech there is a thematic relation to the developing play. *Romeo and Juliet*, for all its beauty, is not one of the great documents of the human spirit. It is a play in

which erotic love comes to grief; and the low talk of Sampson and Gregory is not without relation to the intense eroticism of the young lovers themselves. The images which the servants use in the play's opening lines have their own dramatic point and effectiveness. They inform us of the feud upon which the tragedy hinges; but, through the medium of the pun, they also anticipate the great and sensual love of the protagonists.

Scarcely seventy-odd lines of the play have been spoken when Benvolio and Tybalt are fighting furiously in the street. The citizens of Verona and, later, Prince Escalus enter to put a stop to the swordplay. The prince's speech is interesting, as it presents an instance of a very simple, even obvious use of dramatic imagery. But the simplicity of the images takes dignity from a device of another kind—from a formality of phrase and cadence which recalls the royal speeches of the history plays. Imagery is but one of the many modes of expression to which the poetic dramatist has access:

Three civil brawls, bred of an airy word,
By thee, old Capulet and Montague,
Have thrice disturb'd the quiet of our streets
And made Verona's ancient citizens
Cast by their grave beseeching ornaments
To wield old partisans, in hands as old,
Canker'd with peace, to put your canker'd hate.

Here is an obvious reference to the insult which the State suffers at the hands of discordant and rebellious subjects. Even more important is the reiterated play upon the word "old," along with other references to age. There is a certain visual and contextual pertinence in such imagery. For one thing, the old people, the elder Montagues and Capulets, are present on the stage as the Prince speaks, as are the citizenry with "old partisans, in hands as old." Now all this serves to underscore certain truths: that these people are too old to be quarrelling, that even their quarrel itself is old, and that peace, not contention, should be the occupation of old age. It is no wonder, then, that their bluster is all out of proportion to the "airy word" that gave it birth. And the references to "canker'd," and through this adjectival form back to the noun, "canker," the disease of old age, give further

emphasis to the idea of maturity gone far astray. This in turn relates to the theme of the play, which may be seen from one point of view as the dramatic conflict between youth and youth's elders. In other words, we have here a very simple and reasonably effective use of dramatic imagery. It relates both to the visual composition upon the stage and to the comprehensive thematic unity of the play. It possesses, finally, a certain economy of means.

Though it has been glanced at in the Sonnet-Prologue to Act I, Benvolio's speech to Romeo's mother introduces the light-darkness antithesis which is to dominate so much of the action. Similar imagery occurs in the balcony scene, in other of the love scenes and soliloquies about love, and in the scene at the Capulet family tomb with which the play ends. By that time, the light-dark imagery has become so complex, perhaps even so ambiguous, that it both dominates and undermines the play's essential statement. What do light and dark mean in the special world of *Romeo and Juliet*? To begin with, we may take them as the simplest of Jungian archetypes: Light is a good thing, and dark is a bad one. Light provides warmth and protection from one's enemies; dark offers no warmth and no protection.

But *Romeo and Juliet* is in most essentials a Christian play; it is manifestly the product of a Christian culture. We would do well, then, to remember the *Lux in tenebris lucet* of Saint John, where the Light is that of Christ, or at least of Christian Truth, and the Darkness that of Sin. Now we may be very loth to see Romeo and Juliet as sinners; at the very worst our modern secularism can view them as guilty only of error. But even this lends an added dimension to the play. Error is more than accident; it is at least human and not impersonal; and it allows some sort of tragic view, which accident does not.

Against all this may be urged the emphasis on the "star-cross'd lovers" and Friar Laurence's letter undelivered in Mantua; and such an emphasis must be granted, along with the manifestly arbitrary course of the action itself. What I would wish to call attention to, however, is that the setting and imagery, especially much of the light imagery, would often seem to indicate a more tragic and meaningful play than would the action as an abstract

from the whole. This unresolved ambiguity is, I think, a fault and not a virtue.

Benvolio's speech to Madame Montague, wherein he describes her son's love-sick state, opens with a reference to the sun:

Madam, an hour before the worship'd sun
Peer'd forth the golden window of the east,
A troubled mind drave me to walk abroad;
Where, underneath the grove of sycamore
That westward rooteth from the city's side,
So early walking did I see your son:
Towards him I made; but he was ware of me,
And stole into the covert of the wood.

It is beautiful poetry; it comes to an actor's tongue with easy grace, but note also that it introduces imagery of great dramatic effectiveness. Here are images which relate, which belong to the play as something intrinsic and indispensable. Here a theme is introduced; and as the play progresses these early references to light and dark take on an added significance, especially if we see in them a broad and perhaps specifically Christian symbolism. These initial references contribute to more than theme alone; they introduce Romeo and are the beginning of his characterization. They are, moreover, suitable to him who speaks and to her who is spoken to. Benvolio is also sick at heart; and in this he bears a likeness to Romeo, while the elegance of his speech befits the age and character of the woman he addresses.

In the speech which follows, that of old Montague, Romeo's characterization and the play's thematic emphasis gather interest. Particularly important is the description of the young man's conduct at dawn:

Away from light steals home my heavy son,
And private in his chamber pens himself,
Shuts up his windows, locks fair daylight out,
And makes himself an artificial night.

The words upon which I should like to lay greatest stress are in the line about "artificial night," for in a sense this play is a study of the artificial, perhaps most so when we least expect it. It is not only about young love, but about Love, which is not precisely the same thing. It is about the sense of sight, about appearance

and reality; and the imagery bears this out. The sense most frequently resorted to is that of sight. Now this is common enough in poetry of all kinds, indeed, almost inevitable. Though I can offer no statistical proof, I am persuaded that we have more words relating to seeing than to touch, smell, hearing, or taste. I would even suggest that *Romeo and Juliet* goes beyond the high proportion of sight images usual in English poetry.

And there is artificiality, too. It is not enough to dismiss this as the verbal trickery of a young dramatist, as a condition necessary to his fledgling art. Artificiality belongs to the tragedy, is a part of it; it permeates much of the imagery; it fits the characters and the situation in which they find themselves. Nor will it do to limit this to the Romeo of the play's opening, to say merely that there he is in love with love, that later he loves more profoundly. True, he does; but there is a self-conscious emotional posturing in the "pilgrim" sonnet he and Juliet speak to each other at their meeting, even as there is an element of artificiality in the balcony scene.

Manners are most useful in crisis. Pose belongs to their situation and is perhaps nowhere better seen than in their love of paradox, especially at points of great dramatic stress. That imagery which at times seems most strained is often quite just and appropriate. Such imagery relates dramatically to the situation in which it occurs. Whatever failure of tragic range there may be usually lies in the situation and action, not in the imagery. We wear the habit of Christian symbolism—*en habillements bourgeois*; and *Romeo and Juliet* persists in metaphors drawn from the Christian symbolism of light and dark. The doctrinal weight of such images is often too great for the story, and this disparity between symbolic function and the fable in which it is embodied can perhaps best be explained as a part of the Renaissance alteration of medieval Christian values.

Whatever its exact habitual content, Jungian or Christian, the light-dark antithesis is set up early in the play; and we are not surprised at the verbal exchange between Benvolio and Romeo, upon Romeo's first entrance:

Ben. Good morrow, cousin.

Romeo. Is the day so young?

Ben. But new struck nine.

Romeo. Ay me, sad hours seem long . . .

This relates beautifully to what has gone before and stands in fine ironic contrast to the haste which is to characterize the sequent action. The speeches of Romeo which follow, being a sort of long and paradoxical moan, are in keeping with what we have just learned of his character. The same is true of this exchange between the two friends, in which the theme of sight, or that of appearance and reality, is touched upon:

Romeo. O teach me how I should forget to think.

Ben. By giving liberty unto thine eyes;
Examine other beauties . . .

And, four lines later:

Romeo. He that is stricken blind cannot forget
The precious treasure of his eyesight lost:
Show me a mistress that is passing fair,
What doth her beauty serve but as a note
Where I may read who pass'd that passing fair?

There is in the play's imagery much emphasis upon reading, books, and generally scholarly paraphernalia; this is, I think, a further instance of a more general insistence upon sight and the possible failure of sight, or in a wider sense, upon judgment and lack of judgment in a world where morality informs imagery and deforms action.

III

With the famous balcony scene, the themes earlier introduced are given eloquent reiteration, and this with the closest sort of relevance to characterization, situation, and even the visual image which the stage and its actors present to the audience. Though cadence and phrasing contribute their share to the success of the scene, the particular justness of the imagery makes this the best known passage in the whole play. It is all here: the artificiality (which in its own way is strangely sincere), the emphasis on light and dark, the insistence on sight and blindness.

First, the artificiality: The passage is one Petrarchan cliché af-

ter another, yet "cliché" seems and is too harsh a word. The reason for this is not long to be sought; it lies in the suitability of many of the Petrarchan conventions to the situation and characters. It lies also in the extraordinary fluency and dramatic effectiveness with which those conventions are handled. They become less stale when lent the particular beauty of this diction, for apt cadences refresh cliché.

The imagery here serves a number of functions simultaneously. One of these is the underscoring of setting. It is night; and the audience, which in the Elizabethan theater would have been sitting in broad daylight, or at least in the shadow from broad daylight, must be made aware that it is night. But the setting relates to the night-darkness theme, and so does the imagery, in a most telling fashion. Sight is repeatedly mentioned, either directly or indirectly. Nor should it be forgotten that the scene at this point represents the Capulets' orchard, with its echoes of Eden and the possibility of a Fall. It is an ambiguous Paradise.

Juliet is on a balcony, beneath which Romeo stands or comes to stand; and the metaphors employed constantly underscore this relation in space by analogous relations between words. Shakespeare works this out so neatly that the developing imagery even reflects Romeo's movement from his entrance at one side of the stage to a position beneath the balcony. Romeo's first sight of Juliet is, as it were, from a distance and on a horizontal plane; for his relation to her is that of an early riser, out-of-doors, to the rising sun:

But soft, what light through yonder window breaks?
It is the East, and Juliet is the Sun.
Arise fair Sun and kill the envious Moon,
Who is already sick and pale with grief
That thou her maid art far more fair than she. . . .

By the end of this speech he has moved "close" enough to see "her cheek upon her hand," and in his next speech he stands directly beneath her:

O speak again, bright Angel, for thou art
As glorious to this night, being o'er my head,
As is a winged messenger of Heaven
Unto the white-upturned wond'ring eyes

Of mortals that fall back to gaze on him
 When he bestrides the lazy puffing clouds
 And sails upon the bosom of the air. . . .

This use of imagery in harmony with stage movement is dramatic in a simple but rather effective way. Nor is this all. The same metaphors of angels, clouds, sun, moon, and heaven, so in keeping with the visual image presented by the stage and its actors, relate beautifully to the theme and action. There is, for example, the reference to the moon, with its echo of Juliet's own chastity. There are the stars which recall old Capulet's allusion to "Earth-treading stars, that make dark heaven light" in his speech to Paris. There is also something here of the "star-cross'd lovers" of the Sonnet-Prologue to Act I.

All this celestial hyperbole, moreover, is perfectly in keeping with the newly discovered love of the two speakers. Even their differences in attitude, male and female, are reflected in the imagery. Juliet is more reticent, more concerned with the world and the danger it holds for them; when she draws an image from the vaster reaches of nature, it is to make a telling point within the context of conventional social behavior:

I have no joy of this contract tonight,
 It is too rash, too unadvised, too sudden,
 Too like the lightning which doth cease to be
 Ere one can say, it lightens, . . .

For the rest, her imagery frequently has a domestic tinge. She speaks of flowers, of a rose in particular, and of a "wanton's bird"; and in two lines her passion causes her to stumble upon a rather awful truth:

. . . swear by thy gracious self,
 Which is the god of my idolatry, . . .

It need hardly be insisted upon that this is a sort of love, but not Love. And a similar truth is spoken unawares by Romeo:

O blessed, blessed night, I am afeared
 Being in night, all this is but a dream,
 Too flattering sweet to be substantial. . . .

It is the theme of sight, of appearance and reality, and, by extension, of judgment and lack of judgment, reiterated once again;

and the constant play on light and dark, with their moral implications, repeatedly underscores such a theme.

It should further be noted that the more striking nature imagery is Romeo's; he is given to the vaster hyperbole, and in this there is a necessity within. He is the more infatuated of the two lovers (I would insist that he is infatuated even here, despite the earlier affair with Rosaline) and, if not the more at fault, at least the one more likely to fall. He has most confused ends and means, true marriage and untrue, just as he has confused light and dark; and from this springs the extravagance of his imagery. It is an effort to justify that which can only be explained, and his metaphors are a great straining after the impossible. They belong quite properly to his character—that of a Petrarch gone somewhat astray—and to the thematic solidity of the play.

Its specific symbolism aside, a word should be said about the nature imagery in the balcony scene and elsewhere in the play. Such imagery, at its best, has a particular function in drama. This is to relate the drama to the great exterior world of physical and even metaphysical phenomena, for through such relation a play may assume a compass greater than its three or five acts. Now this may or may not be a highly involved form of the pathetic fallacy, depending upon one's view of the universe; but its dramatic effectiveness in a play like *King Lear* cannot be denied. Of this rare and finest use of nature imagery, a use which seems a willing contribution by nature's forces rather than their exploitation, I can find no instance in *Romeo and Juliet*. Imagery is there used to emphasize theme, to deepen characterization, and to reflect movement and setting; but it is not employed as a means of bringing to bear the whole weight of nature upon the fate of two young people. The stars that Romeo defies are a device and not a function. All this is merely one way of saying that *King Lear* brings more to function than *Romeo and Juliet*, that it is a greater play; but the reason should be noted.

IV

There remain the final speeches of the protagonists, the culmination toward which so much of the previous imagery has

tended. But here again the effect of the metaphors and similes is strongly reinforced by cadence and phrasing. This is particularly true of the grief-stricken speeches of Romeo over the bodies of slain Paris and sleeping Juliet; and much of the strength of the scene derives from the momentary smoothing of the verse when Romeo views his bride and sees in her, unknowing, a sort of victory-in-death:

... O my Love, my wife,
 Death that hath sucked the honey of thy breath
 Hath had no power yet upon thy beauty:
 Thou art not conquer'd, beauty's ensign yet
 Is crimson in thy lips and in thy cheeks,
 And death's pale flag is not advanced there. . . .

But our concern is with imagery and not with diction in a broader sense. Despite its general thematic suitability, some of the imagery in this last scene seems excessive. Take, for example, Romeo's speech to dead Paris:

I'll bury thee in a triumphant grave.
 A grave? O no, a lanthorn, slaughter'd youth,
 For here lies Juliet, and her beauty makes
 This vault a feasting presence full of light. . . .

Yet even in this there is an element of appropriateness. A lantern is a source of artificial light, it is not Light itself. It is the old story of Romeo's confusion of ends and means, of true and proximate marriage.

A similar excessive image, with somewhat similar justification, is seen in the following:

How oft when men are at the point of death
 Have they been merry! which their keepers call
 A lightning before death. Oh how may I
 Call this a lightning?

Here the image is a double one, turning upon a pun: a lightening of the spirits and lightning in the sky. Granted the use of the pun as a serious mode of expression (which the modern audience is loth to do), there remains a certain violence in the image which is in keeping with Romeo's overwrought state. The image relates, moreover, to the light-dark theme of which I have already said so much. It also contributes to setting and atmosphere; the motion-

less Juliet must be seen somehow to be bright and shining. The Elizabethan stage, lacking the lighting facilities of the modern theater, had constantly to resort to verbal means to achieve seemingly physical effects. This task was not the least which dramatic imagery was called upon to serve, and the difficulty of the function imposed accounts in a large measure for the vigor of Elizabethan dramatic metaphor.

At Romeo's death, there is an image drawn from the sailor's world of storm and shipwreck; it is the old medieval (and older) idea of life as a voyage. This relates closely to a similar view of life as a pilgrimage, which may be reflected in a possible meaning for "Romeo," i.e., pilgrim. The same idea is to be found with even greater emphasis in the sonnet spoken antiphonally by the two lovers at their first meeting. It treats of pilgrims and palmers, and at the same time Romeo is disguised as a palmer. And his life has been a voyage, a pilgrimage which ends at the Capulet's family tomb. In his last moments he addresses the apothecary's poison as "Thou desperate Pilot." Suicide is a sin. Is it too much to say that passion has steered his life to shipwreck despite the true Pilot?

It is and it is not, for the play is in so many ways contradictory and ambiguous. A part of this ambiguity may be explained as the natural confusion of the protagonists confronted with a "moral" world hostile to their desires. But even this leaves much to be explained. It is the curious fault of *Romeo and Juliet* that it draws its images from a moral tradition, while its action is such as to deny morality. The distinction is a difficult one, even for the audience, which, by the end of the play, has lapsed into the general moral confusion. We are moved by Juliet's awakening, and we should be, but let us try to remember the import of the imagery which has gone before. She awakens, discovers her husband, now dead, and speaks the moving, almost sentimental line—a cry for justice which explores mercy:

Thy lips are warm. . . .

It fits the action so obviously. Less obvious, however, is its close relevance to the play's essential statement as derived from the complex of its images. The sensual is strong in *Romeo and Juliet*; it may even be hinted at in Juliet's last words:

Yea noise? then I'll be brief. O happy dagger,
This is thy sheath—there rust and let me die. . . .

The rest is explanation and sorrowful reconciliation, and there is a particular justness in Prince Escalus' final speech:

A glooming peace this morning with it brings,
The Sun for sorrow will not show his head.
Go hence to have more talk of these sad things:
Some shall be pardon'd and some punished.
For never was story of more woe
Then this of Juliet and her Romeo.

The sun does not shine, for men are blind and cannot see. Nor is the final judgment solely that of the Prince of Verona. Our sorrow is not lessened by such a belief; it is made more profound as we are made aware of human weakness.

V

I have tried to see the island image in the larger sea of the whole play, to relate it to theme, characterization, and setting as they, too, exist in that sea. From such a point of view the play gathers interest. I think, for one thing, that stage production might profit from a close attention to dramatic imagery. The stage directions in Shakespeare's plays are few and sketchy; when we have them, often we cannot interpret them. Who knows precisely what a sennet is, or how long a flourish is to be? Years of *wissenschaftlich* scholarship have served chiefly to confuse. How are entrances and exits to be handled? How were they handled in Shakespeare's own time?

We seldom know. But dramatic metaphor can often be an indirect though effective hint as to stage movement; it can be an aid to direction, as we have noted in the balcony scene of *Romeo and Juliet*. A good director senses this, I think, almost instinctively. I wonder if he need be quite so instinctive, and I hope Stanislavsky's ghost will pardon me. A more explicit attention to dramatic imagery might well enrich both direction and performance. This accomplished, perhaps the relationship between the stage and literature, between art and life, will gain in intimacy and force, to the solace and enlightenment of our condition. So Greek a pleasure is well worth seeking.

Martin Dworkin

THE DESPERATE HOURS AND THE VIOLENT SCREEN

The Desperate Hours and *Teen Age Crime Wave* are major versions of a recurring melodrama, in which a family or community—here the former—is imprisoned, or besieged by criminals. There have been at least two other films in recent years with closely similar themes: *Suddenly*, in which Frank Sinatra and two henchmen held a family at bay while they prepared for an attempt to assassinate the President; and *The Night Holds Terror*, written, directed, and produced by newcomer Andrew Stone, in which three homicidal desperadoes seized the home of a young couple. The theme of the invaded community has been represented recently in a larger number of films including *The Wild One*, *Violent Saturday*, *The Phenix City Story*—and *The Blackboard Jungle*, which purportedly tried to treat real problems of education and juvenile delinquency with frankness, but patently exploited the form, as well as the rationale of the entrenched-hoodlums melodrama. Western films, of course, have as one of their leading motives the struggle to rid a town or territory of badmen in control, and often include, or even focus upon situations in which small groups of people are beleaguered.

The theme of the good held captive by evil is ancient, as is the dramatic device of analogizing between society in the large and in microcosm. We may add, too, that it is no new thing for films to debate the use of violence—nor, to be sure, for them to seem to decry the brutality they actually glorify. But it is significant that the screen should be so preoccupied now. (It is practically impossible to count how often the embattled family or community theme

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has appeared on television. The family-held-hostage, particularly, offers opportunities for closet melodrama uniquely suited to the intimacy and focalized framing of the medium). In fact, the nature as well as the number of these films suggests that we may be reaching a climax in the latest cycle of screen violence. At least, at this point it may be possible to clarify what we mean when we judge a film to be gratuitously violent—and, perhaps, to suggest ways of recognizing the effects violent films have upon us.

If we like, we may see *The Desperate Hours* and *Teen Age Crime Wave* as representing the best and the worst of their type—comprising a kind of dialectical statement. It is as if the movies were carrying on their own debate, under the pressures which have been exerted recently by government, religious, educational—and even film industry groups, concerning the nature and quantity of brutality on the screen. And this debate reflects the ambiguity of popular attitudes—at least as much as the movie violence itself expresses destructive forces, or wishes, or tendencies at work in our society. It may be true, as Paul Rotha and Richard Griffith have asserted, that the spate of crime and gangster films after World War II was directed toward “a public weary of the conflict, but so steeped in violence that anything else seemed tame.” But the critique of violence in the films themselves suggests doubts, as well as compulsive surfeit—even as the shooting, slugging, and other melodramatized mayhem continues. When and whether a man should use his fists, or draw his guns, or reach for the rifle over the mantel—or call the police, are questions constantly asked, and answered, in the movies. But they bear a formal resemblance, and have a certain analogical pertinence to questions of how we may deal with many problems, local, national, and international. In the ways in which many people deal with issues such as the use of nuclear weapons, total war, preventive war, and the value of allies and international agencies for peace, it is possible to discern refractions of the images of conflict of typical crime and Western movie melodramas.

The images are conventionally contrived to involve the audience in such ways that the principal actors are its protagonists. The deliberate intention is to establish empathic participation. The heroine's anguishes and fulfillments, the hero's struggles and

triumphs, are designed to incarnate prototypical experiences of the imagination in those who watch. The unique, enormous power of film, and its televised manifestation, lies in this incomparable capacity to implicate people; at once expressing their imaginations, as participating in a kind of collective imagination, and providing the imagery and symbology whereby their participation is articulated.

The theme and execution of *The Desperate Hours* and *Teen Age Crime Wave* purpose an especially excruciating implication of our sensibilities. Both films establish a situation of primordial challenge, in which a family is captivated by violent criminals, its members held as hostages for each other's survival. Both confront decent people with the need to fight—exemplifying the integral necessity which film industry voices have submitted as the justification of violence in films. Both dramatize a crucial, and symbolically elemental threat to the basic unit of society, as well as subjecting its members to a battery of provocations. Decency is not only vexed and incited to act, but forced to preserve itself.

The quality of the two films, of course, is incomparable. *The Desperate Hours* is perhaps the outstanding film of its kind. From Joseph Hayes's screenplay, after his own novel and stageplay, it is produced and directed by William Wyler, who disposes a virtuoso's armament of cinema techniques. In the swift clear delineation of distinctive characters, in his economy in counterposing them to achieve a drama of immediate engrossment, continuing suspense and considerable subtlety, Wyler offers a demonstration of screen directing that should recreate his reputation among those who do not remember his *The Little Foxes*, or *The Best Years of Our Lives*. Frederick March completely personifies that significantly unusual protagonist: the embattled father, shocked into sustained, ferocious warfare for his family. Humphrey Bogart (who established the type of the gangster holding a group hostage in *The Petrified Forest*) as completely projects the criminal: deadly, fiercely vigilant, wholly immoral. The opposition of these two characters rises at moments to true heroic pitch—not the least because both March and Bogart possess the rare dramatic presence that can vivify and dominate the screen by itself.

In contrast to *The Desperate Hours'* proficiency, *Teen Age Crime Wave* sometimes gives the impression of having been jerrybuilt on its few sets, from a script concocted by the director and the actors as they went along, borrowing elements from sensationalist films about juvenile delinquents, jailbreak movies cops-and-robbers chases, and—most significantly—family-held-hostage melodramas. By the time the two juvenile hoodlums, overacted with incredible ineptitude by Tommy Cook and Mollie McCart, have overcome the officers taking the latter to reform school together with the unjustly implicated Sue England, it is apparent that every act of brutal, criminal behavior is going to be relished, even as it is avowedly condemned. By the time the two have been driven from the home of Kay Riehl, James Bell, and their son, Frank Griffin, which they have dominated at pistol-point, we are as sick of Cook's performance as we are of the insufferable punk he portrays. The film obviously, if ineptly, intends us to be pleased when Miss McCart is shot as her just desert, and Cook gets his in a beating by Griffin, after an inexplicable retreat to an observatory. Crime does not pay, and the good guys are people who administer the beatings in the end.

The matter is not so clear in *The Desperate Hours*. The criminals here are not malevolent upstarts, but truly dangerous men: the cold, fiercely cunning Bogart; his young brother, Dewey Martin—perturbed by his first contact with the respectability he has been conditioned to despise, but dangerous out of the only loyalty he knows; and the hulking, brutish Robert Middleton—a homicidal monster with the mind of a stupid child. From the moment we know of them, in a remarkable shot from the inside of an automobile, with only a hand showing and a cold voice selecting the home to be invaded for a temporary hideout, we know that these men are really dangerous, completely criminal. In fact, the conventional melodrama of improbable triumphs is explicitly repudiated, as March struggles to convince his nine-year-old son, Richard Eyer, that the guns in the hands of the criminals are real, and that attempted heroics, "movie-style," will get loved ones killed. The mutual concern of the rest of the family: March's wife, Martha Scott, and their daughter, Mary Murphy, is convincing—

not only because the criminals are so credibly dangerous, but because the dilemma is so agonizing.

March has to scheme and battle against Bogart and the other two—and against the police. For him, police intervention means the death of his loved ones—whether at the hands of the criminals, or in the crossfire. Concerning the issue of whether or not to go to the police, there has been some critical debate. Bosley Crowther, in the *New York Times*, remarked that the whole story was unrealistic because March did not notify the authorities at his first opportunity. In reply, to point up the reality of March's agonized choice, writer Joseph Hayes wrote the *Times*, citing the true instance of a criminal who killed a child he was using as a shield, because a policeman fired at him, despite warnings. Within the story of the film, however, the issue is academic. March's house is finally surrounded by police, but he is allowed to go in alone—following a debate of two police viewpoints: the one interested only in getting the criminals, no matter if innocents are hurt; the other, movingly represented by Arthur Kennedy, arguing for March's right to try to save his family, and for a concept of police work not at odds with the decency it is supposed to protect.

The final showdown, then, opposes the protagonists of decency and of evil in the traditional single combat of the conventional melodrama. Martin, Bogart's younger brother, has gone off alone earlier—in a first venture into independence—and has been killed, ingloriously wounded by state police, and then run over by a huge trailer-truck in a scene that is deliberately gruesome to emphasize the tragic waste of his life. Middleton, the moronic giant, has been tricked by March into getting his arm caught in the front door, and, running from the house in uncontrollable pain, has been shot down by the police. Only Bogart is left, with a gun he thinks is loaded pointed at the head of March's little boy. At March's command, the boy runs—and Bogart discovers what March has known: that the gun is empty. In March's hand is the revolver the criminals had used to menace the household, loaded. Bogart taunts March to shoot; although beaten, he savors March's hesitation. March insists that now, for the first time, he understands the mind of a killer like Bogart. The latter, however, senses otherwise, sneering, "You don't have it in you." March cannot,

and does not pull the trigger. Almost with contempt, the criminal lets himself be driven out of the house, into the fire of the massed police guns.

The bad guys are killed by the police, the regularly constituted agency for violence against violence. In Joseph Hayes's final script, this legal violence had been sardonically depicted: it was apparent that Bogart could have been captured, but was shot down by Kennedy, against whom the criminal had sworn vengeance years before. But perhaps to provide a final fillip to Bogart's figure of heroicized malevolence, Wyler now has him fling his empty pistol at a police floodlight, smashing it. It is the final gesture of a gangster-king, out of the archaic *Götterdämungen* epoch of gangster films, in which the Muni-Cagney-Bancroft-Robinson-Bogart underworld titans made their exits to the orchestration of shattering glass and cascading shots. This end, however, does emphasize the stature of the antagonist March has overcome. And if it is a moment of obvious braggadocio, it is also one of final, complete futility.

For the meaning of the film, however, it is a moment almost of anticlimax. The melodramatic confrontation of good and evil has already occurred—in traditional style, but with quite untypical resolution and significance. In the final chase and combat between the hoodlums and the hero in *Teen Age Crime Wave*—as in almost all melodramas of violence—the intentional meaning is clearly the direction of the audience implication so that there is triumph, release, and pleasure in the beating given the bad guy. In *The Desperate Hours*, good must triumph over evil, too—but what the *good* is, and the manner of its victory, are conceived with a most unusual consistency. At least, the dilemma of ends and means is given a clearer statement than in most melodramas, and is resolved with much less of the meretriciousness that gives the audience axiomatic outcomes and sanctified brutality: a dubious morality won through cheap thrills.

At the climactic instant—the classic moment of crime and Western melodramas, when the hero has drawn his gun and is prepared to kill with the perfect proficiency of unequivocated rectitude—March does not shoot. It is not that Bogart is unarmed, and so can cheat the movie hero's game, according to its little-boy's laws.

He is still, unremittingly dangerous. March does not shoot *because we do not want him to*. There is no mistaking Hayes's and Wyler's intention. The scene might have come out differently—with consequent transformation of the film's meaning. Nor would March have had to pull the trigger.

Out of a myriad memories of other movies, we can imagine Bogart lunging at March—the pistol skittering across the floor out of reach—a desperate scramble to grasp it—vice-like grips and terrible grimaces (dolly to close-up)—heroic haymakers crashing against one chin then the other—the door splintered off its hinges—the berserks battling on the landing, bursting through the balustrade to fall to the floor below—the last, colossal, deliberately-directed Sunday-punch, dropping the beaten Bogart in a heap, that tries to rise, only to collapse in utter vanquishment—the emergence of the bloodied, magnificently bedraggled March through his front door, into the floodlights of the admiring police and the arms of his loved ones.

Such an outcome, with its salutary purge for costive spirits, would have been according to the rules of movie melodrama, which make it the hero's right—even duty—to beat up or kill the evil adversary at the proper moment. And when he does either, the audience does it with him—and thereby hangs the crucial equivocation of the controversy over "excessive" brutality on the screen. It isn't the brutality of the evil protagonists that is really at issue, generally speaking. This is usually made clearly repugnant: it is the behavior whereby the bad guys show they are bad. The issue arises out of the audience's empathic association with the hero, personifying good and right—and being violent at least, about it. If it were only a matter of some especially suggestible moviegoers leaving the theatres to emulate the villains and their methods the issue would be simple and clear—as it has been during those occasional cycles of films deliberately glorifying crime.

Recalling Aristotle's definition of evil as having a deficient, not an efficient cause; that was evoked by Aquinas against the perennial Manichees, the problem here refers to the conditional nature of good, as the end of human conduct. For the moral rectitude of the movie hero is apodictic: by definition, as it were, But what he does to achieve the right—and what the audience

does with him, and, later, because of him—is far less certainly good. Those in the film industry who have justified heroic violence because it is on the side of right at least implicitly presuppose that it is an evil: necessary, as in warfare and in situations of mortal challenge to the good; but an evil, nevertheless. What is “excessive” violence on the screen then becomes a matter of quantity—and perhaps of taste. But it is not one of principle, since any violence admittedly is at best a bad means towards a good end. This solution makes possible the considerable hypocrisies of films which have first denoted violence as evil, then established it as necessary, then have reveled in it. The guns spit and the heads crack; but the dead and maimed are only evildoers after all—and it makes a glorious victory.

That the solution amounts to no more than doing the wrong thing for right reasons—the end justifying the means—is not evaded on the screen. The necessary evil is easily a lesser one, within the fictional melodramas enacted. But off the screen, where the movies may have their actual outcomes, dispersed through infinities of possible behavior and transmuted by illimitable differences of character, the lesser evil may become the principal one. What gloriously defeated unqualified villainy in the dream may merely drive some sordid motive towards some dubious good, in the real world of imperfect protagonists and ambiguous purposes. It is not vital here to be concerned with establishing the movies as either causing or expressing violence in society. They may do both, of course, in different dimensions of analysis, each with its own order of evidence and proof. All that need be admitted is that the film penetrates and informs our thoughts and habits after we leave the theatres, to emphasize the importance of the way in which the issue of ends and means is raised on the screen. And we may appreciate the more what Hayes and Wyler have done in *The Desperate Hours*—despite the foregone machine-gunning at the close—to evoke recognition of the real perplexity of the matter and to state it with force and clarity.

For the argument from the necessity for screen violence to hold water, it must be made clear—not only logically, within the story, but empathically, in those committed vicariously within the film's drama—that violence is no better than an expedient.

When it becomes, by design or indirection, an occasion for empathic satisfaction, it is revealed as an end in itself—and no amount of “industry statesmanship” or press-agent’s casuistry can argue the implications away. That violence may be a necessary resort in our lives is not at issue here, but its representation on the screen. Once this is recognized, the frequent confusion of violence with the requirements of “realism” can be clarified. Men do kill and beat each other with bestial ferocity, outside the theatres, everywhere. But actual violence is rarely dramatic, at first hand. Even in war, after the parades are marched, the filthy, day-to-day business of soldiering begins, and glory is something in the press dispatches: something to color memories, formed in images of plays and pageants. On the screen, what is called “realistic” violence is quite stylized, in one mode or another, in order for us to view it as having dramatic meaning. When this formal structure is absent, what we see appears as senseless, sordid, and tragically trivial as the Brownian movements of mobs in newsreels, erratically rushing here or there in some cause or other, without character or plot, and with a topical significance that has to be explained to us by the narrator, for mobs are all alike, and their passionate importance ephemeral. The newsreel images are “realistic,” to be sure, but undramatic without the super-imposition of headlines, narrated captions—or the format of the newsreel itself, designed to equate breathlessly the minute and the momentous, while snatches of nondescript, manufactured music assign the proper emotional tenor to each sequence.

The “necessity” for film violence—as for any other filmic element—is established by film form, as it is recreated in each instance. And each instance, according to the purposes of its makers, will determine the style—“realistic,” “romantic,” or even “fantastic”—in which the violence is depicted. To argue the necessity for screen violence except in terms of dramatic intentionality is fallacious; the most frequent argument from the requirements of “realism” is usually meretricious. How much violence there is in a film, and the force of its emotional battery, is a matter of intention—hence of control, incarnation, artistry. Screen violence is *created*, and we may speak properly of there being too much of it, as if film makers can do something about its quantity and

quality—not only without sacrificing their artistic and moral responsibilities, but in order to fulfill them.

The climactic moment of *The Desperate Hours* is a critical point in the course of film entertainment during the past ten years. Again, the audience, personifying society, decency, has been implicated in a desperate situation, and has had to concur in desperate measures. But at the moment of intentional nudity, it is made responsible for its acts, rather than provided with heroic surrogates. Hayes and Wyler achieve razor-sharpness of empathic focus, and the audience makes its choice—not only as it does, ineluctably; but as it must, desperately.

POETRY

John Nixon, Jr.

Walk Through the Queen Ann Woods

What I should like—ah, with the warmest pulse—
Would be an oval walkway through the green,
Through country pampered to the prettiness
Almost of parks. Three convex miles or less,
Where elms stood at attention and blackbirds
Whistled baroquely (if at all) and rocks
Observed the rules of symmetry, would do.
Of course, I should prefer a varied view
Coming and going.

Haplessly, today
My path goes unintriguingly straight out
So that I am obliged to yo-yo back
Over the same route. Also, blackbirds clack
without regard for tempo. Scenery
Is most distinguished by its utter lack
Of any feeling for formality.

What I should like—ah, with the warmest hope:
A path where Dryden might have walked with Pope.

JOHN NIXON, a native Mississippian, has appeared before in *Shenandoah*. His poetry has also appeared in the *New Yorker*, *Saturday Review*, *New Republic*, *Georgia Review* and the *Lyric*.

In Which the Red House Burns

Depression. And a fiercer red arose
From our brick-colored house beside the tracks
Than any paint. To scorch the winter night,
The flames raced up. The water fell and froze.

Fleeing, my father grabbed, through sparks and smoke,
For something—anything—that could be saved.
Along with Mother and us frightened, lean
Boys, he rescued our old sewing machine.

What, given time to choose, he would have chosen
I do not know. But this we had: (no cash),
Ourselves, a tired machine to stitch our future,
The fabric of our past crumbling to ash.

Sam Bradley

At Jeffers Tower, Years Past

(For Garth Jeffers and Robinson Jeffers)

"Lasting!" consciousness sunned. "Too much, too good
to pass away. And we, Sown Men,
cannot be devoured."

In Sphinx-resting time we towered
by the sea-tower. Wondering
at the stones spelt from sea, we stood,
and thumbed carved sand and lettered wood:
yet not believing legends of waxing and waning,
crosses and cross-roads, nor the dragon-kissed rumors
of last torches, of war. We stood
by the sea-tower of your father's strength attaining
some wave-round knowing of endurance, of time,
and of our own sea garden of young manhood.

A keeping of time, a keeping of wave of rhyme,
a keepsake of promise of kindred of kind—
how can a Sown Man find
his own, for sure? Inheritance. Gift of sea
beat into words, eroded, lifted to be
rule-tower or refuge.

And can a Sown Man hear
in himself, kindred voice? Can he draw near
depth silence of stones while landscapes, the long
shoreslines of men vanish and billow, vanish and flower—
and, at last, speak?

We felt that structures sown
in us, waiting, skeletal in us yet meant to dwell in

SAM BRADLEY appeared in the previous issue of *Shenandoah* this year. Called by the *Colorado Quarterly* the "well-known Quaker poet," he has also been represented recently in *Antioch*, *Kenyon*, *Perspective*, and *Noonday*.

structures of our begetting (children and song)?
We, the rememberers. We, the Sown Men.
And in us the pulse and taste of sea
and castings of many-parented ambiguity.

Poets are Sown Men. Uprooted, rooted in
sacrifice, the scapegoat season, with cairn thrown
over hearth. This I know now and must have known
by the sea-tower, where each nomad epic
seemed ours by right of strength and sun
and the imperturbable riddle of being alone
—before the wave-fall of "Father, it is done"
—before I was day-bearer of hawks and had grown
silent before sacrifice.

Well, not for grief
I thread backward, nor to find the far tower,
but to praise songs it held, and gave, and the belief
that stone must rise in beauty.
And to honor him who loved sea stone.

Stephen Spender

Short Poems

*Inscription on a Stele, in the Museum at Athens,
of a grandmother and grandson*

See my daughter's dear child now I hold in
my lap. So
I held him of old in those days
When with living eyes we both saw the sun's rays.
Now that he's dead I still hold him, because
I am dead too.

Kyoto

A temple drifts
Through moss-clouds. A tree
Aslant across a path scatters
One leaf precisely
As I dot this *i*.

Hiroshima Rebuilt

A town can be rebuilt but not the wreck
Of the sky in the mind's eye, bombed by a cloud.

STEPHEN SPENDER, on a lecture tour this year in the United States, contributed these previously unpublished poems on a recent visit to Washington and Lee University.

After Stefan George—Mein Kind Kam Heim

My boy came home
The seabreeze still curves through his hair.
His tread still rocks
Through fears withstood and his young love of faring.

The saltbrine spray
Still flares along the bronze bloom of his cheek.
Fruit quickly ripe
In foreign suns savage with haze and flame.

His gaze is weighted
Already with some secret from me
And softly veiled—
He stepped into our winter out of spring.

So open burst
His budding forth that almost shy I watched
And forbade mine
His mouth that chose another mouth to kiss.

My arm surrounds
Him who unmoved by me towards other worlds
Bloomed and grew—
My one my own endlessly far from me.

Albert Howard Carter

Thirteen Ways of Saying in Memoriam

(For Wallace Stevens)

- I Among three quarter centuries
The only moving thing
Was the eye of the poet.
- II Your vase
Alive with blackbirds
Was the imagined life.
- III In your glass coach
Riding over Connecticut
You were never startled
By any shadow.
- IV You were of one mind
Like a tree
And a blackbird.
- V You did not entertain
Your bohemian friends
They said you said
At your office.
- VI Your imagination
Unleashed the moving river
And the flying blackbird.

ALBERT HOWARD CARTER, presently professor of English at the University of Arkansas, will become head of the Division of Humanities at the New Florida Presbyterian College. His poetry has been published in a number of American periodicals.

- VII It was with a strange malice
That you distorted the world
With words in a green light.
- VIII It's not so much that they are words
As the way they sound.
- IX Our sky is imperfect
And so your boughs
Dropped their fruits
But the mental moonlight
Exited.
- X Will you come really dripping
Dripping in your hair from sleep
To studious ghosts?
- XI If not
I'd as lief be embraced by the porter at the hotel.
- XII The river is moving
The bawds of euphony
Are not crying.
- XIII It was evening all afternoon
The day you died
It was not going to snow
But the blackbirds sat
In all our cedar trees.

BOOK REVIEWS

Jealousy. ALAIN ROBBE-GRILLET. Grove Press, Inc., New York, 1959.

The novels of Alain Robbe-Grillet, of which *Jealousy* is the second to appear in English translation, are the products of a literary insurrection which has been underway in France since 1956. The revolt is being carried out in grand style, following the classic French pattern for such movements, with a militant *chef d'école*, a group of dedicated disciples, manifestos, a pantheon of ancestral gods, and a host of literary Goliaths to do battle against. Neo-Realism is the name given to the new doctrine, and its adherents produce works usually referred to as "anti-novels," because of their radical departure from conventional concepts of fiction. The tradition which they have chosen to attack is a venerable one, that of psychological analysis—the painstaking dissection of human motives that has characterized so much of French literature. According to Robbe-Grillet and his fellow Neo-Realists, the novelist has no business reproducing the thoughts of his characters or ascribing motives to them. He must break away from the tyrannical tradition of Balzac and Proust and strive for total objectivity. The truly modern novel should be a series of purely visual descriptions, arranged but in no way interpreted by the author, presenting, like the screen in a darkened movie theatre, vivid "fragments of raw reality," and bringing the awareness of a world "where things are there before being *something*."

This bizarre technique, in *Jealousy*, is applied by Robbe-Grillet to that most threadbare of all fictional themes, the triangle—jealous husband, unfaithful wife, and lover. The setting is a remote banana plantation in one of the French colonies. The guilty heroine, referred to simply as A..., and the neighboring planter Franck, go through the ritual motions of an adulterous liaison. It is only their actions which the reader sees, since the husband, although present, serves the novelist as a "camera" and is neither named nor allowed to participate in the reality which his eyes perceive. The pages of *Jealousy* are a record of what is presented to his sense of vision and little more; nowhere is there an attempt

to formulate thoughts or feelings provoked by what is seen. The lovers drink cocktails on the verandah before lunch and dinner, their chairs suspiciously close together; A... writes a letter on a sheet of blue letter-paper, the edge of which can later be seen emerging from Franck's shirt pocket; Franck crushes a centipede which has appeared on the dining-room wall and frightened A...; Franck and A... go on a shopping trip to a coastal town and return a day late, pleading car-trouble; A..., getting out of a car driven by Franck, momentarily leans back in, as if she might be kissing him.

These scenes, along with descriptions of the banana groves surrounding the plantation house and a smattering of extremely trivial conversation, constitute the basic substance of *Jealousy*. The reader, as the book progresses, notes with bewilderment that the same scenes recur time and time again, sometimes almost verbatim, sometimes with slight variations. It soon becomes apparent that the camera-eye of the husband, passively recording the objects and actions within its range of vision, is merging with his *mind's eye*, which conjures up visual images of what has already been seen, and which mingles these perceptions with no regard whatsoever for chronology. The obsessive jealousy which gradually takes possession of the husband's mind is never indicated by the author except by means of these images, by the gradually increasing tempo at which they recur, and by the hallucinatory quality given them as the novel reaches a climax.

In a central section describing the emptiness of the plantation house as the husband wanders through it during A... 's absence, we suddenly find the scene in which Franck crushes the centipede repeated with cruel intensity, transferred in the tortured mind of the husband from the dining room to a hotel room shared by Franck and A... Strangely interwoven with fragmentary memories and the sights and sounds of the lonely house, this episode is followed by a brief description of Franck's car crashing into a tree and bursting into flame. Here the husband's jealous rage has reached a murderous fever-pitch. Yet at the end of the novel the reader finds it difficult to decide whether there actually has been a murder. The stain from a rivulet of blood appears on the windowsill of A... 's bedroom and the porch floor beneath it,

but in one of the last scenes she and her supposed lover are again drinking cocktails on the verandah, exchanging their usual platitudes. Are they being observed, in the flesh, by a resigned husband, or is this simply the memory of a murderer? We are not given to know.

Unfortunately, this work, although interesting in concept, is extremely tedious in execution. The reader may find some pleasure in his own identification with the husband. The strange succession and repetition of scenes in the gloomy old plantation house has a certain effective Kafkaesque quality. But the author's insistence on exactness and completeness of description throughout the work makes it difficult to appreciate the rest. Where a few carefully selected characteristic details would have served, Robbe-Grillet gives interminable material inventories. He is obsessed with precise measurements and intent upon classifying everything possible into geometric figures. In one ludicrous three-page passage having to do with a banana grove, the reader finds information such as the following:

In the second row, starting from the far left, there would be twenty-two trees (because of the alternate arrangement) in the case of a rectangular patch. There would also be twenty-two for a patch that was precisely trapezoidal, the reduction being scarcely noticeable at such a short distance from its base. And in fact there are twenty-two trees there.

After several paragraphs of such details, one is so exhausted that he has the greatest difficulty persuading himself to continue reading.

It is ironic that the occasional effectiveness of *Jealousy* depends largely on its psychological interest, for it is "sacrosanct psychological analysis," as practiced by so many generations of French writers, that Robbe-Grillet most often fulminates against. Although he denies his readers direct knowledge of the central character's thoughts and feelings, his selection of the sights, memories and hallucinations that present themselves to the husband's visual sense is basically just as arbitrary as is the analytical probing of the psychological novelists he denounces.

It is equally ironic to note that Robbe-Grillet, who speaks of the Balzacian tradition to indicate all that is wrong with pres-

ent-day fiction, sins in the same manner as the nineteenth-century master by a tiresome over-emphasis on the material background of his work. The difference is, of course, that Balzac's outpourings are those of an overexuberant genius, whereas Robbe-Grillet, seriously maintaining that "the optical, descriptive adjective . . . content to measure, situate, limit, define, may show "the difficult path to a new fictional art," works as a careful, almost Flaubertian craftsman, and still contrives, with his adjectives, to bore and exasperate his readers on almost every page. There are more *longueurs* in the 149 pages of *Jealousy* than in the whole of *La comédie humaine*.

EDWARD HAMER

Larousse Encyclopedia of Astronomy. LUCIEN RUDAUX and G. DE VAUCOULEURS. Prometheus Press, New York. 1959.

"In the beginning," the author of Genesis tells us, "God created the heavens and the earth." That was about five billion years ago, and according to one cosmologist it took Him about twenty minutes. Some modern astrophysicists are becoming convinced that while He was about it, He created two universes—the one we live in and see stretched out to the nether regions of space and composed of matter, and another, made of anti-matter, equally distended and pervasive, of which we have caught infinitesimal glimpses. Whether you give God the credit and assert with the Psalmist, "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament sheweth His handiwork," or believe that, like Topsy, "it just grew," you will admit, I'm sure, that a study of the cosmos is of paramount interest to anyone who is concerned about man's place in it.

Historically, astronomy developed out of metaphysical speculation and, like any burgeoning ethos, gradually shucked off the superstitions and mythological elements which gave it birth. Today it stands with perfect ease in the company of the purest sci-

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ences. The modern astronomer will not essay to predict a man's personal fate from the constellations; he attempts something at once grander and more portentous—the destiny of the earth and planets, the sun and its many cousins, the ultimate calm that will prevail throughout the turbulent and tempestuous cosmic sea.

Where does one look if he wishes to find whence he came, where he is, and whither he is going? With a scope that will surprise, a richness that will amaze, and a simplicity that will gratify, the answers are supplied in Larousse's *Encyclopedia of Astronomy*. It is a single large volume of five hundred pages that houses a universe between its attractive blue covers—a universe so immense, so intricate, so active, so full and yet so empty, so bright and yet so dark, so profligate with clues of its origin and structure, and yet so chary of its secrets, that on contemplating it one is simultaneously ennobled and humbled.

I suggest you discard any ingrained notions which you may have about how to read a book when you pick up this volume. Do not start on page v with Dr. Fred Whipple's introduction and work your way purposefully through its twenty-one chapters, patly concluding your effort with its discussion of "The Philosophical, Scientific and Technical Value of Astronomy." Unless you are already an astronomer, this book will not present a cogent message; this book will be an *experience*, one as rich and varied as you are likely to find on the printed page, and in common with all meaningful experiences, it should come swirling around you, enveloping and overwhelming, disordered and unorganized. Start by looking at the pictures. There are 818 of them. Who can say what will catch your fancy? Perhaps it will be the sight of giant flames leaping a half-million miles out into space from the fiery surface of the sun. Maybe you will scrutinize the full-color plate of Mars. Is that white cap ice? Are those really canals? Does that reddish color mean vegetation or rust? You will surely pause and gaze at Saturn with its halo of rings easily the most beautiful sight in the heavens as seen through a telescope. Study the detailed map of the moon in the sure knowledge that it will become as familiar as your state road map. Turn a few pages and see this giant satellite bathed in the earth's eerie shadow during a lunar eclipse. It was the moon viewed thus that prompted your

forebears to speak of "blood on the moon." Keep turning and you will find photographs of those vast conglomerations of millions of suns, the galaxies, immense beyond imagination. See the sovereign sun relegated to an obscure niche in one corner of our own galaxy, an average star with thirty billion companions (count them) stretching out over space so far that it takes light, traveling 186,000 miles every second, more than 100,000 years to span it. And if you are not completely subdued at this point, turn on and lose yourself in complete bewilderment as one photograph after another of some of the one-hundred odd million other galaxies compete for your attention. This is a picture book, real pictures of real starry objects taken by real men with real telescopes which are themselves pictured in the chapter on "Instruments and the Methods of Measurements."

Somewhere along this pictorial journey you will stop to read. It may occur when you begin to wonder if the text makes any sense out of all those confusing revolutions and rotations and precessions and nutations of the earth in its wobbly circuit about the sun. You may stop to find out what causes those dark bands around Jupiter's equator. What is the source of the sun's light and heat? What produces the aurora borealis? What are comets? meteors? nova? Is the space between stars truly empty? What are the chances of our colliding with some reckless intruder in the inky void? There will be questions, and you will want to read.

And when you begin to read you will make a second pleasant discovery: Larousse is *readable*. This is not a handbook for astronomers. Nor is it a glib, descriptive account, premasticated for digestion. It tells what must be told if you are to understand our universe. Some of these ideas are transparent, some translucent, a few opaque. They are all presented with as much simplicity as befits the subject. Sometimes I marveled at the ingenuity of its authors in making an obtuse point intelligible. There was the place, for example, when, in preparation for a discussion of a study of one of the planets by infrared and ultraviolet light, the simple expedient of showing a familiar landscape using the same photographic process is introduced. On another level, the discussion of the method by which stellar distances are estimated, the pioneering work of Shapley on the Cepheid variables, and the re-

cent revisions of his data are related as lucidly as your newspaper's account of yesterday's bridge tournament.

Not only are the facts there, but there is an explanation of how the facts are obtained. It will be interesting to some just to learn that such and such star is 4.3 light years away, that its diameter is 1.04 million miles, that it is composed mainly of hydrogen and helium, traveling away from us at unheard of speeds, or a thousand other pedantic figures. But the story of how this wealth of information has been compiled—the tedious experiment, the complicated calculations, the educated guess—these are part of the drama. If your fancy runs to the fanciful; if the startling, the weird, the unusual are your meat, then set aside your Science Fiction and study the astronomical truths, for truly in astronomy, truth is far stranger than fiction.

Consider this passage from the chapter, "Past and Future."

The characteristics of universal evolution that seem to be of the most fundamental significance are: the expansion of the universe and the irrevocable wastage of the reserves of energy in the interiors of stars. Between them, these apparently irreversible processes determine the future evolution of the universe. . . . The expansion is ceaselessly increasing the separation of the galaxies, and we must envisage a time when the velocity of this mutual recession will exceed that of light. . . . Today the radius of the observable region is about 1.5 billion light years, [which is] large enough to contain some thousands of millions of galaxies. Before these cross the fatal frontier into eternal invisibility, the universe will have to expand by a factor of perhaps a hundred or a thousand—and this, at the present rate, will take about [ten to a hundred billion] years.

It is hardly necessary to add that no human being will still be on the scene to witness that event. Taking only a single factor into consideration—the sun's radiation will long before then have dwindled to such an extent that the earth's atmosphere will have condensed to liquid air. . . .

There is, however, another possibility. Fifteen thousand million years from now the sun, having exhausted its stock of hydrogen, will relapse toward the status of a white dwarf, and it is possible that it will pass through the nova stage. . . . In this event, the earth and all the other planets will be vaporized, or at any rate their outer layers would melt—the consequences for anything still living at that time would be equally catastrophic.

While there is yet time, seek out a copy of Larousse, and start your exploration through space. And when you finally close the covers, go stand on an open hill and contemplate the ethereal and evanescent eternity of time and space overhead. It must have been in such an attitude of contemplation that Walt Whitman exclaimed:

O vast Rondure, swimming in space,
Cover'd all over with visible power and beauty,
Alternate night and day and the teeming spiritual darkness,
Unspeakable high processions of sun and moon
and countless stars above. . . .

Now first it seems my thought begins to span thee.

EDWARD F. TURNER, JR.

The Novels of William Faulkner. OLGA W. VICKERY. Louisiana State University Press. 1959.

The Mansion. WILLIAM FAULKNER. Random House. 1955.

Everybody interested in contemporary fiction should read Mrs. Vickery's study of Faulkner, for despite certain limitations, it is singularly illuminating. I hope we need no longer argue that Faulkner is the most considerable American fictionist of the twentieth century. As Allen Tate has noted rhetorically, the eyes of the world are on William Faulkner; moreover, though there are writers as gifted (indeed, there are many), they lack Faulkner's magnitude and power.

I must quarrel briefly with Mrs. Vickery. She discusses each of the novels "inductively," and the concluding section of her book is devoted to "the grand pattern." Her avowed aim is the elucidation of the theme and character; criticism has many resources, and some kind of limit was essential, we know, because Faulkner has written very many long novels. Within her self-imposed limits, no critic has been more successful than Mrs. Vickery; yet—to take a random example—that critical apparatus is too limited which fails to note, even in passing, that *A Fable* is a badly written novel, in

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which words are sometimes assigned completely incorrect meanings and in which prose is dangerously congested, even clotted. (*A Fable* is impressive in characterization, more so in structure, in total meaning; but the style, which Mrs. Vickery merely refers to as abstract, is a positive obstacle.) Though not passing qualitative judgments on *A Fable*, Mrs. Vickery sheds much light on that difficult novel; her analysis is lucid and convincing.

Because of her method, Mrs. Vickery ignores one major function of the critic. She is forced to assume that her reader will have all the works of Faulkner at his finger-tips; this is posing an ideal reader, which critics seldom have. In fact, a main responsibility of the critic, I should say, is to place before his reader as well as he can the work of art, to recreate it in judging it; however, we cannot berate a critic for not doing what she never meant to do; and what procedure Mrs. Vickery could have followed, except abstractly to elucidate the themes of some sixteen books, I confess I do not know. Irving Howe's *William Faulkner* (1952) gives a fine feeling of immersion in Faulkner's fictional world; but Mrs. Vickery has considered more deeply; I cannot imagine a better guide for the reader who wants an exact analysis of the meaning of each novel.

Without attempting to do justice to Mrs. Vickery's book (her prose is remarkably compressed), we may note a few major themes she finds constant in Faulkner's fiction. Of the guides to behavior a man may follow, the right one is the intuitive truth of the heart, the source of all humane and ethical conduct, most accessible to women, Negroes, and children before they are fully exposed to the categorizing mind of adulthood. Fact, history, and legend are but limited commentaries on this truth. Adult society attempts to order its experience by stock responses; these are necessary to preserve continuity but must continually be re-examined to maintain a state of health.

Mrs. Vickery devotes a good chapter to Faulkner's concept of time as both subjective and objective; but that comes as no revelation. However, her comments on "language as theme and technique" summarize many points I had not brought together before, or even considered. (I remember being especially conscious of the use of language in *As I Lay Dying* and *Absalom, Absalom!* Mrs.

Vickery demonstrates that Faulkner's concern with language in itself, not just as style, is central.)

A word does not merely denote an object; it includes the speaker's experience of it. This obvious fact acts as a barrier to communication. There can be no direct relation between word and referent, since both constantly change. Proper nouns bear the closest relation to reality. In abstract conversation, a concept can carry an indefinite number of associations; if the concept is allowed to prescribe behavior (cf. "virginity" in *The Sound and the Fury*), men become slaves to words. Moreover, words tend to become categories, then compressed myths ("Negro"), and people respond to them as such. Despite the apparent dangers, however, Faulkner does not deny that truth can exist in a verbal formulation, or that such formulation may not be necessary (cf. Gavin Stevens' role in *Requiem for a Nun*). Non-verbal truth may be shared, but it is through the tricky medium of words that truth is transmitted.

When one of Faulkner's characters is unaware of language, or incompetent in its use, Faulkner speaks for him; he also speaks for the communal memory (a device Andrew Lytle would probably call the Hovering Bard). Otherwise Faulkner establishes character by adjusting his idiom—except when he must escape from the limited perspective.

As Faulkner's definition of man, Mrs. Vickery finds at the heart of it the conflict between the morality of society and the ethics of the individual; thus the theme of *A Fable* is identical to that of the Yoknapatawpha novels. "Far from idealizing the Old South," Mrs. Vickery writes, "Faulkner sees in it, as in the army, an instance of the paralyzing influence of a rigid caste system and a closed society in the individual." According to Mrs. Vickery, Faulkner condemns class and clan as stultifying. The church formalizes and kills the religious impulse. Law perverts ethics into static standards of behavior. The drama in Faulkner's work occurs when the intuitive heart's truth is forced to oppose institutionalized "truth," false, because it is rigid and externalized.

I am very much impressed by Mrs. Vickery's investigations, and will merely note that Mrs. Vickery's interpretation is not the conventional one, and further, that the society which she states that

Faulkner condemns has been an extremely fertile source for his art. Indeed, I believe I am entitled to ask, with Donald Davidson, why William Faulkner is not a product of somewhere north of the Ohio. Mrs. Vickery's analysis is splendid and original as far as it goes, but it does not go quite far enough. It is too simple to assert that Faulkner (granting his genius) is unalterably opposed to everything in his native Mississippi; I am sure that Mrs. Vickery does not consider that a condition of his achievement; I would like very much to read an essay by Mrs. Vickery, already so admirably versed in the fiction, on Faulkner as a *Southern* writer—which he indisputably is.

Cavils aside, however, Mrs. Vickery offers many fresh insights into Faulkner's work, and the general reader as well as the student should find her study vastly helpful.

Faulkner's newest novel, *The Mansion*, concludes the author's saga of the Snopes family. It is not the novel we hoped for; it is not another *The Hamlet*; but neither can it be dismissed as a bad book. It is a spotty book. The deadly odyssey of Mink Snopes, which occupies a good majority of the space, is fine Faulkner; but most of the middle section seems an interpolation that might well have been omitted. The style can rise to magnificent rhetoric, and most of it is structurally sufficient; but there are passages which are awkward, hard to read, and, worst of all, simply tedious.

The publishers state that *The Mansion* is a "complete novel by itself"; and the attempt to make it "complete" results in Faulkner's rehearsing material from *The Hamlet* and *The Town*. For the sake of the narrative, it would have been better to assume that the reader knew the previous books—except, of course, Faulkner keeps tinkering with his events, so that certain twice-told happenings receive different emphasis and treatment.

Structurally, the main action of *The Mansion* deals with Mink Snopes' murder of Jack Houston, his trial, long imprisonment at Parchman, his release, his laborious effort to reach Jefferson, and the shooting of Flem, now a joyless bank president. This much is fine; but we are not even sure of Faulkner's intentions in other portions of the book. Apparently, he is finishing the chronicling of Flem's inevitable rise to wealth and position; but Flem, despite certain outward signs of his now invulnerable respectability, is real-

ly a very shadowy presence. When he first created Flem Snopes, Faulkner took delight in his very outrageousness—but no longer; much of the account of Flem's rise is perfunctory. I cannot agree with Alfred Kazin that Faulkner does not consider the Snopes family human enough to be taken seriously; in the few real glimpses we catch of him, Flem is more human than ever before (for instance, in re-telling Eula's funeral, Faulkner completely omits the fact that Flem spits at his wife's grave); and what Faulkner seems to feel for him, strangely enough, is compassion. A few sections of *The Mansion* read like folk literature or even tall tales, but unlike *The Hamlet*, this latest novel is not meant on any level to be humorous.

Mink Snopes will take his place beside Faulkner's great characters. He has radical notions about the sanctity of human life, but he is not a typical Snopes. Small, inoffensive-looking, harmless "as an adder," he is in his way a person of great integrity. The indignity heaped on him by Jack Houston is so great he can assert his own humanity only by shooting Houston down. When Flem, by being conspicuously absent at his trial, refuses to help him, he resolves to kill his kinsman, and he does so after nearly forty years of prison; it is purely a matter of justice. Montgomery Ward Snopes, who is employed by Flem in his machinations to keep Mink in prison, is given the theme plainly by Miss Reba when she says, "Every one of us. The poor son of a bitches." This theme, as profound as it is simple, sustains the novel and informs Mink's fate.

Unfortunately, Faulkner brings in Gavin Stevens, Ratliff, and Charles Mallison, who added dimension to *The Town* when Flem was making Jefferson his own, but whose presence in the current book merely violates the narrative pattern that has been established. It is difficult to see any useful purpose to be served by multiple commentators here. Linda Snopes Kohl, stone-deaf and a card-carrying Communist, comes home to live with her legal father, Flem; it is true that she signs the application for Mink's parole—which is like signing Flem's death warrant; but Mink had nearly finished serving his time, anyway. Undoubtedly Faulkner meant to tie up all the loose ends; I do not believe, as Louis Rubin has written, that Faulkner is limited to the primitive;

but the presence of Stevens, Ratliff, and Linda merely divert the reader from the main action.

The Mansion is flawed in its structure; perhaps Faulkner intended to tell two related stories rather than one. It is a cloudy book. One need only glance over Mrs. Vickery's table of contents to be reminded that it is a disappointment; but as one follows the quite insane, strangely human career of Mink Snopes, he is not likely to forget that it is the work of William Faulkner.

THOMAS H. CARTER

The Old South Illustrated. PORTE CRAYON (edited by CECIL D. EBY, JR.). University of North Carolina Press. 1959.

In a century we have moved from the emphatic self-confidence of Kant and Emerson to the apparent abandonment of Kafka and Kerouac. Beset by the reality of continued indifference to individuality, our writers complain of feeling uprooted, anonymous, lonely in crowds. Underneath the technological glitter life seems inauthentic. It is like getting a sack full of second-class mail.

This, in turn, has caused scholars and historians to re-examine our heritage with renewed zeal—in some instances, frenzy. We simply must have a usable past. Once we understand it, we will not despair so of the future.

One result of the re-examination has been a renewed interest in America's "local color" writers. They followed the trail of Englishmen like Scott or Bulwer-Lytton, and Frenchmen like Hugo or Mérimée; but their flavor and idiom was American. One such writer, Mark Twain, is now generally regarded as first rate. The list of second and third raters grows. To that list we can now add "Porte Crayon" (David Strother, 1816-88).

Strother was born into that vast cousindom (John Pendleton Kennedy, John Esten Cooke, Philip Pendleton Cooke) that presented Virginia with her nineteenth-century literature. His early life, as summarized by Dr. Eby, was colorful. When young "Pidge"

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Strother tired of defruiting orchards and setting off gunpowder, he tied a jackass to the bell of a church steeple. While still in his teens, he took a six-hundred mile hike up the Valley of Virginia. He walked over Europe, his *tour de force* being a forced march from Rome to Naples, followed by an ascent of Vesuvius, and an unsuccessful attempt to make it erupt. Back home, he toured the South as an artist-writer, producing a series of articles in *Harper's Monthly* between 1853 and 1858 which established the basis for his fame, and this selection of his work.

Like that of most "local colorists," Strother's prose shows the dual influence of romanticism and realism. The provincial characters he shows us are more often Boeotian than Arcadian. The best of them, Negroes and mountaineers, are memorable. Dr. Eby sees his realism as a shield against the mawkish idealizing of the Southern Negro, and his sketches of mountaineers like Conway and Tim Longbow as the most satisfactory ones of the period. These two achievements, coupled with his "unstrained revelations of American character," should assure Porte Crayon a permanent place in American literature.

Surely Crayon is at his best describing characters like the colored fish-cleaner Betsy Sweat, "an abominable slattern who smoked a short-stemmed pipe almost incessantly, and would drink numerous consecutive jiggers of raw whisky without winking." He moves on from this point (p. 168) to condemn his contemporaries who "made heroes and heroines of big negroes and beggars' brats. The world admires and weeps, but unfortunately the real black-amoor remains unwashed, and the poor child's head uncombed, as before."

Sometimes Crayon's determination to see the unadorned truth reveals not only his courage but his ignorance. Some idea of how poorly he understood the originality and charm of Jefferson's "Monticello," for example, can be had from this description:

It is difficult to conceive of an interior plan more ridiculous and ill-contrived. The stairways are so narrow and steep that they would scarcely be admissible as passages to a kitchen loft. It is not uncommon to find great men ambitious of little things entirely out of their line, and we suppose the statesman, here as at the University, meddled a good deal with the builders.

Right or wrong, Strother's prose (which seems to me far superior to his art) does indeed help us to focus our eyes on reality. His own region has done him an injustice to deny him even a bibliography, let alone a biography, since his death. Dr. Eby promises to correct this condition next fall, when his biography is scheduled to appear. Then we shall be in a better position to evaluate his claim that *Porte Crayon* is a link between the vernacular tradition of the Southern humorists and the romantic tradition of the Southern novelists. Meanwhile we are glad to have this well-edited volume, which shows plainly that most of our thinking about the South has too much sugar coating and too little first-hand authenticity.

MARSHALL FISHWICK

MARSHALL W. FISHWICK, professor of American Studies at Washington and Lee University, was a Fulbright lecturer in Denmark during 1959. He lectured on American culture in England, Germany, and France. He is presently at work on a study of tradition and tension in the South.

Exhibition of Painting at Washington and Lee University

The opening of the new Evans Dining Hall at Washington and Lee University has provided the opportunity to expand the exhibition of art within the University community. The first of a series of continuing exhibits, of about three months' duration, has already been hung; and Dr. Marion Junkin, chairman of the Fine Arts department, has indicated that plans for future shows are under way. Future exhibitions will represent various periods of art, single painters, and possibly drawings, etching, wood-cuts, and sculpture. They will be supplementary to the regular schedule of activities in the duPont Fine Arts Gallery.

The initial show, from the permanent collection of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, cuts across various schools and nationalities in the modern art field. Painters who might almost be called "old masters" among the moderns, like Andre Derain, Jean Lurcat and Georges Braque, are here. Leaders of America's regional school, like Lamar Dodd and Joe Jones, are hanging alongside Robert Gwathmey, who paints the Negro against a background more symbolic than actual, and Henry Lee McFee, one of America's soundest and most sensitive landscape painters.

Across the way, in the West Parlor, one confronts some of the agitation and brilliance that marks abstract expressionism and the post-World War II stylistic revolution. Here, for example, is Jimmy Ernst's (born in Germany, 1920) "Tomorrow Morning." Ernst has projected his vision of a tomorrow which is mechanical and full of rocket ships, tube-like forms and wires that hold the entire world (and the canvas) in their grip. And here is Stanley Hayter's "Abstraction in Plaster." An Englishman now living in America, Hayter spent his formative years in France. He shows a wide range of influences.

When the current exhibition closes at the end of March, a very fine exhibition has been promised from the University of Georgia. This collection contains many of the foremost American painters

of recent times; Reginald Marsh, Robert Graves, Kuniyoshi, Phil Perkins and others. This exhibition has been made possible through the generous cooperation of Lamarr Dodd, head of the Department of Fine Arts at the University of Georgia, and Alfred H. Holbrook, director of the University of Georgia Museum of Art.

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